

# January 2020 EAP NOTES: How to Toast to the New Year Without Regret!



There are those of us who look to the new year with renewed mind-sets and motivation. But, for some of us, this time of year can feel like less of a celebration and more of a burden. If you're someone who dreads the new year, there are steps you can take to ease the emotional transition.

## Moving beyond regrets and dread

Regrets only hold us back. They also imply that there's nothing we can do about a past situation. So remember: we can't change the past, but we are able to affect the future.

Are you upset that you didn't accomplish something this year? Take a look at what you can do next year to tweak your goal and make it more attainable. There's no need to carry regrets very far if there's something you can still do about those situations. If the new year is something you dread, think of it as nothing more than getting a new calendar. Society puts too much pressure on making drastic changes just because it's a new year, but change can happen at any time, and much of that change is out of our control. Thinking of the new year as just another change might take some pressure off the transition and be the first step in moving away from dread.

## Should you even make resolutions?

**If you're naturally goal-oriented**, resolutions are just a continuation of what you already do. You're a type of person who sets goals on a regular basis and uses the new year to reevaluate or change goals. **If you're someone who has difficulty setting goals**, the new year can be less exciting. You might feel cultural pressure to set unrealistic goals that lead to regret and demotivation. If you do choose to make resolutions, there's a tried and true method of goal setting that can help you actually keep them.

## Be SMART

Resolutions tend not to stick because of the way they're made, which is a reason [80% of New Year's resolutions are abandoned by February](#). It's easier to accomplish goals when they're carefully thought out and put into place with a plan.

This year, **try the SMART method – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound** – and consider the following questions:

- Specific:** What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included?  
When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?
- Measurable:** How can you measure progress and know if you've successfully met your goal?
- Attainable:** Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them?  
What is the motivation for this goal?  
Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?
- Relevant:** Why are you setting this goal now? Does it align with your overall objectives?
- Time bound:** What's the deadline, and is it realistic?

Consider setting resolutions that aren't so focused on diet, exercise or physical appearance. You could set a goal to improve your vocabulary, enhance your job skills or volunteer for the first time – any area in your life that doesn't depend on the cooperation of another person.

## Change is constant

Remember that change doesn't only happen on Jan. 1. It's an ongoing part of life. Goal setting and achieving those goals year-round can ease the emotional transition into the new year. For some, making New Year's resolutions might be the best time to set goals. But don't feel pressured to work too hard against your nature. It's more realistic to set and accomplish goals as needed. Then you can toast to the new year without regret. Does living a better life seem out of reach? A Best Care EAP counselor is available to help. Schedule your confidential appointment by calling **(402) 354-8000** or **(800) 801-4182**.