

10 Simple Strategies for Sticking to Your Goals

We always start a new project with the best of intentions, but it's easy to quickly fall off the wagon. Life gets in the way or we lose that early rush of motivation, and slowly but surely we land back at square one. Whether you want to get more done each day, work out regularly, or shed a few pounds, these small changes will help you hit those major milestones.

1. Visualize yourself achieving it.

Big goals can feel overwhelming — especially if they require real lifestyle changes. There's a plus side, though: You can be certain you'll feel radically different (in a good way!) when you achieve them. Whenever your motivation wanes, visualize how accomplished you'll feel when you reach the finish line.



2. Weigh now against later.

In the moment, it can be tempting to skip an early morning workout in favor of sleeping in, or dig into the chips and dip when you ought to eat a healthy meal. When you're relying on pure willpower to do (or not do) something, try to consider how much long-term happiness you'll get out of it. Compare that tempting, yet fleeting satisfaction to the success you've visualized (see number 1!), and suddenly it's far less enticing.

3. Create accountability.

Try talking to a friend about what you need to do to accomplish your goals, then set a deadline and report back on your progress. For many people, it's important to feel accountable to someone other than yourself — and you can create the same motivation through groups. Want to read more? Join a book club. Need to eat better? Create a healthy eating challenge with colleagues at work.

4. Make it smaller.

No matter what you want to achieve, it can probably be broken down into smaller pieces. Rather than summoning the motivation to work out, just push yourself to get up and put on your workout clothes. Instead of "cleaning the house," pick up just a few misplaced items. Once you've started moving in the right direction, it's easier to keep up the momentum, making it more likely that you'll finish the task.



5. Give yourself a day off.

It may be counterintuitive, but you *don't* have to commit every day of the week. The dread of doing something difficult (and failing) can be enough to prevent us from even starting. If you've got something tough to get done, know that you can give yourself an occasional "get out of jail free" card. A cheat day or meal can be restorative and give you the R&R you need to keep going — as long as you clearly define the start and end and keep them on lock.

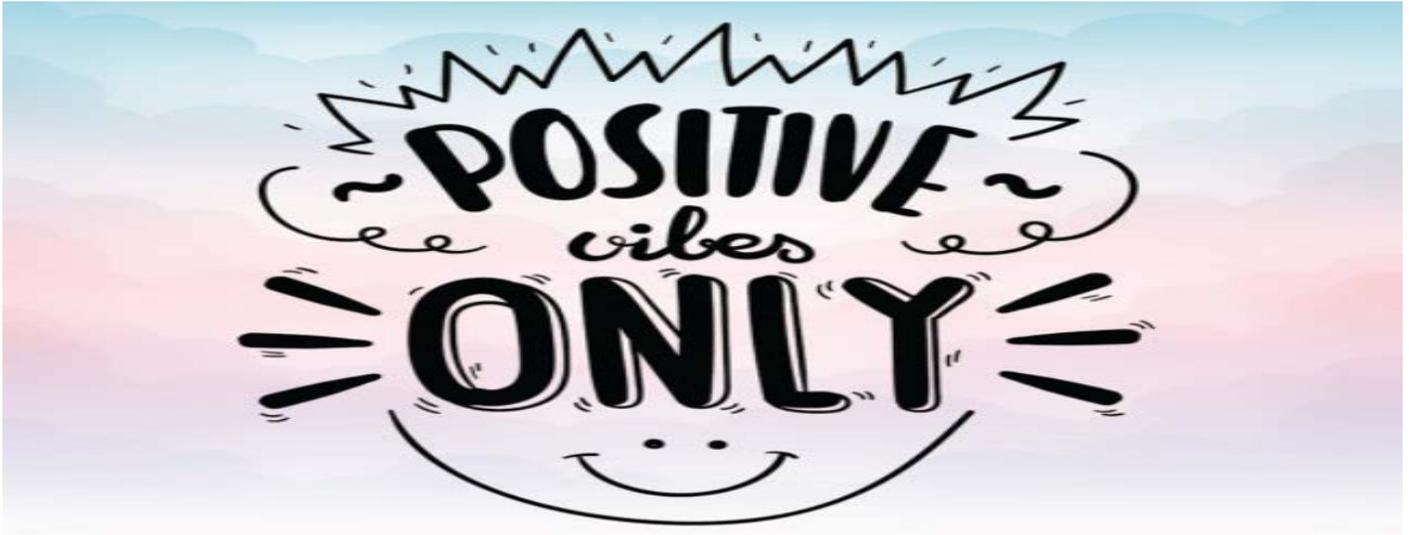
6. Take your brain out of it.

Make like Nike and "just do it." OK, we know sometimes that's easier said than done, but there are plenty of positive things you do each day without even thinking about them (whether that's opting for whole wheat over white bread, taking the stairs, or putting on sunscreen). Rather than considering your goal something <http://dailyburn.com/life/lifestyle/achieve-goals/>

“extra” you have to add to your day, consider it an integral part of your lifestyle and completely non-optional. And consider this: If you do something daily, it’ll become habit far more quickly than if you do it just a few times a week.

7. Surround yourself with success.

The company we keep can have a huge impact on how we feel and how we spend our time. If you want to accomplish something, surround yourself with people who are working toward (or have accomplished) that same goal. Use their achievements as your motivation, and let the positive vibes sink in.



8. Look back.

It’s easy to get lost in the slog of a major project. Take some time whenever you’re feeling down to look back at how far you’ve come. Try journaling or snapping pics to document your successes. You’ll be grateful when you can look back and recall exactly how you looked or felt then versus now.

9. Prep for success.

Research suggests that the brain can essentially “run out” of patience or self-control, making it important to eliminate opportunities for slip ups. So instead of trusting future-you to do the right thing, make tough choices easier by prepping for them when you’re already feeling motivated. For example, plan your workouts or meals for the week on Sunday afternoon after a weekend of R&R instead of just hoping you’ll make healthy choices after a tough day at the office.

10. Know that you *can* do it.

While self-control can be depleted, researchers have also found that effect can be counteracted by simply *believing* that you have the self-control to accomplish your goals. So whenever you feel you “can’t say no” to those brownies, remember that if you *think* you can, you can!

