

# 5 WAYS TO AMP UP YOUR NEW YEAR'S DIET RESOLUTION

By Merilee Kern

Weight-loss wagering contest winners have these five things in common that made the difference between **diet failure and success**

As health-seekers strategize their diet and fitness approach for the New Year, there are a few simple but key considerations that can make all the difference between a successful—and even profitable—weight-loss endeavor and a wellness resolution that falls far short.

I recently connected with diet and fitness industry insider Jimmy Fleming, co-founder of HealthyWage—the world's leading purveyor of corporate and individual weight loss challenges. He offered these insights and perspectives on 5 critical elements needed for the best chance of success with a weight-loss initiative:

**1. Map out specific goals & timeframes.** You are far more likely to achieve your diet resolution if you spend a few minutes thinking it through. Sit down at your desk and dedicate even just ten minutes of your life to strategizing your resolution. Put pen to paper or, better yet, send an email to a friend or family member and make a list of the things you're going to do to change your weight. Simply stating that "I'm going to lose weight" is not nearly specific enough, but it makes a good headline at the top. Write down a date when you will achieve your first goal. This date should be in the near future—one month is a good bet.

Now, make a specific, realistic goal. Most experts agree that you're most likely to succeed if you don't starve yourself, and plan on losing one to two pounds per week. In fact, setting a modest goal – say, one pound per week – can spare you a lot of hunger and stress. You might even forget you're on a diet! Suppose you choose 1.5 pounds per week and a one month goal date: your goal will be about six pounds. Piece of cake (so to speak)! Put your goal and goal date on your calendar (e.g., "Weigh 150 pounds" as an entry for January 30).

Go back to your piece of paper, or email. Under your goal and goal date, write down the word "food." Ask yourself: what exactly is your eating plan? Are you going to follow a particular diet? If so, when are you going to start? Your answer should be "right now." Don't be afraid. This is go-

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ing to be great! If your diet requires that you purchase something or register on a certain website, go do that right now! What about exercise? What specific days and times will you commit to exercising? Who will you exercise with? If possible, call a friend now and set something up.

Review your resolution plan frequently as you work your way toward your goal. When your goal date comes, call a friend to either brag about your achievement or confess that you didn't achieve it and tell them what's going to be different for the next goal date. Now, sit down again (pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard) and set a new goal date and goal. Keep going!

**2. Set up financial incentives.** After you've written out your specific goals and dates, your best bet is to build a little structure into them. Enter: prizes and rewards. A significant amount of academic research shows that you are much more likely to achieve your resolution if you include a double financial incentive – i.e., money to lose if you fail and money to win if you succeed! The reason money works better than the natural motivators of vanity and health is that money can be tied to specific, measurable

goals and deadlines. In other words, financial incentives help prevent procrastination by establishing a firm start date, and help prevent quitting by establishing a firm goal date. Financial incentives also make weight loss a lot more fun and exciting by transforming the process into a game.

There are fantastic tools and resources available online for setting up financial incentives. For its part, [HealthyWage](#) allows participants to make a personal weight loss “bet” with a payout of up to \$10,000. You plug your weight loss goal and timeframe into the HealthyWager bet calculator to see the amount of the prize you can get (based on your inputs) – up to \$10,000. If you achieve your goal, you win the prize. If you don’t, HealthyWage keeps your bet. Fleming explains, “The double financial incentive is an incredible motivator and source of structure that most HealthyWager winners say is indispensable. Although HealthyWage is most widely used by employees at big companies, the HealthyWager betting program is available to everyone.”

**3. Do one thing at a time.** Trying to stick to more than one resolution creates a willpower diffusion that is almost always a recipe for failure. Your weight loss resolution requires time, planning and lots of action items. The winding road from plump to sexy is made of many cobblestones that you have to lay down one at a time with lots of small, frequent decisions (e.g., “this morning, I am going to skip that second donut”). With all the good judgment and will power those little decisions require, you simply won’t have the time and energy for your other resolutions, too. You’re booked solid! If you think your weight loss resolution isn’t that big of a deal, you might be off track.

**4. Tell everyone.** Or, at least tell a few friends or family members about your endeavor. If you’re not willing to tell someone about your diet resolution, you might not be committed enough to succeed. When you tell other people about your plans, a magical thing happens. You know that your supporters are waiting to hear news of your success, and you don’t want to let them down. Some researchers believe that the social element is one of the most powerful tools in your arsenal.

Plus, it’s important to have support – i.e., people to brag to when you succeed; people to talk to when you feel like overeating. Talking is a great antidote to a desire to binge or eat things that could get in the way of your success. If you’re really determined to achieve your resolution, you should consider taking the social element even

farther. Try writing a blog about your progress. Not only will your readers help keep you seriously accountable, but you may discover that being a great teacher is one of the best ways to learn and improve your own success.

**5. Seek fellowship.** When you tell people about your diet resolution, be on the look-out for a dieting partner (or group of partners). When you work on your diet resolution with a buddy or group of friends or family members, you are even more likely to accomplish your goals. You get all the benefits of accountability plus the comfort and fun of knowing there’s someone waiting for you to exercise, compare food and restaurant experiences, and share the ups and downs of dieting. According to the American Psychiatric Association, “Enlisting family and friends in the effort may help.” One study shows that participants who do a weight loss program with friends are more than twice as likely to keep their weight off than those that try to do it on their own.

HealthyWage program statistics confirm the results of the study. For example, HealthyWage tracks the extent to which participants communicate with friends and teammates on their HealthyWage dashboards. There is a direct correlation between the extent of a participant’s social messaging and the participant’s success. The company’s metrics have proven that weight loss that is social is much more likely to be successful. So, get a team together!

### The Money Motivation Paradigm

HealthyWage.com has executed its popular \$10,000 Team Weight Loss Challenge and/or other of its novel “money motivation” diet and fitness programs for over 800 client organizations throughout the U.S. that collectively employ more than three million employees. Large and small companies are utilizing the company’s cash-fueled competitions, which is understandable given multiple highly credible studies underscore the value of employing financial incentives and peer support to motivate weight loss. The programs proffer the best prize-to-bet ratios for players who are most in need of weight loss. Players can opt for prizes ranging from as little as \$100 to as much as \$10,000, and can choose weight loss goals as little as 10% and as much as 25% of their starting weight. Players may also choose the timeframe for achieving their goal—as little as 6 months to as long as 18 months.

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