

# Quitting your Addiction: Realistic New Year's Resolutions

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For many, the holiday season signals a time when drinking, eating and partying to excess is not only viewed as normal behaviour, but is encouraged. For those who abuse or are addicted to drugs or alcohol, the season provides an environment that makes substance abuse even easier. And once the parties die down by January 1st, many substance abusers choose the mark of a new year to make their own New Year's Resolution - the vow to quit their habit once and for all!

Of course, this is an admirable decision. However, you need to be sure that you're realistic about your resolution and that you have the support that you need in order to follow through. For the best chance at succeeding and sticking to your goal, we have provided some tips below:

## ■ Be realistic

You're not going to end your addiction overnight, and that's okay. Make a plan, and check back with it on a regular basis to make sure you're on the right path.

## ■ Be specific

Break your resolution down into manageable goals. For example, aim to decrease your usage by a certain percentage by the end of the month. When you've reached that goal, make a new goal for the next month. Having a smaller goal in sight will give you more motivation each time you hit that milestone.

## ■ Find resources and support

You're not going to be able to stick to your resolution on your own, so make sure to find support groups in the area or even seek professional help, and talk to family and friends that you trust. Ask them to be part of your support group, and let them know you may need to call upon them at all times of the day.



## ■ Adopt a new routine

Quitting an addiction is a serious life change, and it's important to incorporate new daily activities such as exercise, healthy eating, relaxation and new social groups into your schedule to avoid your regular habits of substance abuse. Keep busy, but also be sure to include some time to relax and reflect on why making this life change is important to you.

## ■ Be prepared

When an event such as a business dinner or important social gathering does come up, you may find it more difficult to stick to your goals. So, plan ahead! Set an exact time that you will go to and leave the event, and ask a friend to help keep you accountable during the event. This is also helpful when attending parties during the holiday season to help keep you in control.

## ■ Be nice to yourself

Quitting substance abuse is not going to be an easy ride, and you're guaranteed to have at least one lapse in judgment, or fail to meet one of the goals that you've set for yourself. But don't look at this as reason to give up. Instead, try to understand why it happened, reassess the help you are getting and most importantly - move forward with confidence.

New Year's, however, is not the only time you can resolve to stop using. Any day is a good day to make a resolution for a happier, healthier and more productive, substance-free lifestyle. Just remember - beating an addiction is a very difficult task, and you'll do much better if you have a support system around you. **Don't be afraid to reach out to friends and family, doctors, counsellors or even rehabilitation centres if you're truly serious about becoming sober this year.**