

CRAFTING A SELF-CARE ROUTINE

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

It's the end of January, how is your New Year's Resolution going?

If you've made a shift and you're happy with it, take a moment and reflect on that. Acknowledge the effort and commitment you've put in. Less than 50% of the population will have kept it five months from now. Notice what impact it's making on your life.

If your resolution is not progressing as you'd like it to – or you barely remember what it was, did you pick something that was in your heart, truly meaningful to you? Or was it something someone else told you should be meaningful to you? Sometimes we're making changes rooted in external validation – ex. Wanting to look the way we're "supposed" to look. Or I "should" get healthier.

Sometimes it's simply a setup issue, and this article will address that later on. But why don't we take a moment to start fresh again, with some changes that are customized to you and your life?

This is by no means a comprehensive health and wellness goalsetting guide, but some high points and tips based on my training and experience as a yoga therapist, that could save you some frustration and time.

What do you want to feel?

For years, I told myself that if I won the lottery, I would work less and workout at least an hour a day. Now as a yoga and fitness instructor I actually love the way working out makes me feel. (I realize that not everyone else feels

the same, that's ok – this process still applies to you.) The endorphins, the sweat, being in my body. It's a bonus that there's a health benefit.

After about two years of neck pain caused by not taking enough time for myself, I knew I had to make a shift. No, nobody handed me the million dollar winning lottery ticket, nor did I receive a large lump sum of cash via inheritance, but I started living out my lottery dreams now. Why wait for what I wanted? So I've been working out an hour a day, usually. I give myself some grace on days that it doesn't happen, the same way you should. But instead of "ugh, I have to workout, how am I going to fit it in?" it just comes naturally now. I don't FEEL as good when I don't move, so I'll find myself sneaking in even 10 minutes of a walk or stretch to feel better. My neck pain's subsided and I'm working more efficiently. Cigarette breaks used to be a thing, so what can you fit in for 10 minutes here and there throughout the day to move you toward what you want? Life was stressful and overbooked prior to the pandemic, and now many of us are living in a constant state of not knowing what's next. You may honestly feel numbed out. Taking time for what makes us well can prevent burnout and make us more aware of when we need to put the brakes on.

"May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears." – Nelson Mandela

Take a quiet moment when you're somewhere safe. Close your eyes, rest your hand on your chest and take 10 deep inhales and exhales. What do you

want for yourself? What would feel best on your body? How can your self-care routine support you in that? Just pick one two things to start.

One year my resolution was to drink less. Saving myself an inch on my waistband wasn't the motivation, it was so that I didn't have to FEEL so groggy all the time. Less grogginess opened more doors, more quality time with friends and family. Easier to get up in the morning which would inspire more movement and healthier choices.

As a yoga therapist, I approach health holistically – the physical, mental, emotional, energetic and spiritual. This may take some experimentation, but are all five of those in alignment with your goals? Come July when it's 90 and full humidity, I probably won't be running 45 minutes outside - my physical body would reject it even if my mental body said "YES, Do it!" I'd pay for it later. Try on your goals. Experience can be the best teacher. But notice, as you go along how they're working for you. If they bring on any physical or emotional ickiness, it's time to shift. Know that your goals can shift seasonally.

"Joy is a more powerful motivator than fear," – Dr. Dean Ornish

It sounds corny, but find time for what brings you true joy. Dancing, crafting, alone time with your pets. It does create change. I'm not talking about weight loss or juice cleanses, I'm talking about contentment. It makes life easier. Dean Ornish, M.D., is the founder and president of the non-profit Preventive

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Medicine Research Institute (PMRI). “Telling people who are lonely and depressed that they’re going to live longer if they quit smoking or change their diet and lifestyle is not that motivating,” Ornish says. “Who wants to live longer when you’re in chronic emotional pain?” So instead of trying to motivate them with the “fear of dying,” Ornish reframes the issue. He inspires a new vision of the “joy of living” — convincing them they can feel better, not just live longer. That means enjoying the things that make daily life pleasurable, like making love or even taking long walks without the pain caused by their disease. “Joy is a more powerful motivator than fear,” he says. [Deutschman, Alan. “Change or Die.” *Fast Company*, Amanda Smith, 01/05/05 [https://www.fastcompany.com/52717/change-or-die.](https://www.fastcompany.com/52717/change-or-die)]

What gets in the way? If you’re not sticking to your goals, maybe they’re not that important and you need to pick new ones, that’s ok. Another possible is that you just haven’t set yourself up for success. What conditions do you need to put into place?

Sleep is paramount. You can be on the best medications and vitamins with top-notch personal trainers and home chefs and tons of carved out family time - and none of it will come together if you’re not getting enough sleep.

I get it, you’re busy. Odds are, you aren’t quitting your job, or some of your other responsibilities (looking at you caretakers). Can you shift your relationship to them? What is it going to take to carve out more time for yourself so they have less of a grip on you?

It does take 30 days to make a habit. It should be a little bit uncomfortable at first. I remember when I decided to start running again, it was tough. Start with small goals – like a run/walk, cooking for yourself just once a week. Two minutes of meditation instead of twenty. Five minutes without your phone.

If you can get yourself into a routine that you love, it turns into a non-negotiable, it’s less thinking about it, more fun. I hope something in here was helpful for you. Feel free to email me and let me know at Kaitlyn@tozziyoga.com

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