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Succeeding with Your New Year's Resolution in 2026

The start of a new year brings fresh opportunities—and for many, the tradition of making New Year's resolutions. Common goals include exercising more, eating healthier, losing weight, and reducing alcohol intake. While these intentions are admirable, research shows that only about 12% of people stick with their resolutions for the entire year.

So, how can you make this year different? Here are some strategies to help you succeed:

- **Start Small and Achievable** - If your goal is 150 minutes of exercise per week but you haven't exercised in years, begin with small steps. Instead of jumping into 30-minute walks, start with 10 minutes and gradually increase. Setting goals too high at the start can lead to frustration and quitting.
- **Write Down Your Goals** - Commit your goals to paper and sign your name. Make them **SMART**:
 - **Specific** – What exactly will you do?
 - **Measurable** – How will you track progress?
 - **Achievable** – Is it realistic?
 - **Relevant** – Does it align with your overall objective?
 - **Time-bound** – When will you accomplish it?

For example:

"I will walk for 10 minutes on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday at noon this week for a total of 40 minutes. I will record my efforts on my calendar."

- **Track Your Progress** - Use a journal, app, or calendar to record your efforts. Seeing your progress over time is motivating and reinforces your commitment.
- **Plan for Setbacks** - Life happens. If you miss a week of exercise or indulge in an unhealthy meal, don't let it derail your progress. Remind yourself that the healthier you are striving for is worth the effort. New habits take time to form. Setbacks are normal and expected—they're part of being human. If you slip up, don't give up. Simply start again.
- **Celebrate Success** - Reward yourself when you reach milestones. A new pair of walking shoes or cozy socks can boost morale and keep you motivated.
- **Upcoming Classes to Support Your Goals** - The Meadowlark Extension District is offering two programs to help you start strong:
 - **Dining with Diabetes** – Begins in February in Holton. This four-class series includes learning, demonstrations, physical activity, and tasting healthy foods. The focus is on strategies to reduce the health risks of diabetes.
 - **Walk with Ease** – Starts in Seneca in March. This six-week program helps participants, especially those with arthritis, begin and maintain a safe, effective walking routine.

For more information or to register, contact the Kansas State University Extension – Meadowlark District at 785-364-4125.