

Dal News

CREATING A MORE COMPASSIONATE APPROACH TO NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Stephen Abbott - January 5, 2021



Remember to be kind to yourself as we enter the new year, says Simon Sherry, a clinical psychologist and professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience. (Olya Kobruseva/Pexels)

As people around the world enter into the new year, many are likely hoping the dawn of 2021 will bring about positive change — especially after a year as tumultuous as 2020. And while the start of the new year is often treated as an annual opportunity to make personal change, the beginning of this year feels even more significant than usual given the one that preceded it.

That quest to change yourself, whether it be improving your lifestyle or perhaps focusing on your self-worth, often takes its form in the time-honored tradition of new year's resolutions.

Simon Sherry, a clinical psychologist and professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, says now more than ever it's important to be kind to yourself as you set goals for the new year. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted life in a multitude of ways and it certainly hasn't been easy.

"Make sure that the pursuit of that goal has more compassion than ever because that kindness and that acceptance and that compassion is important in this messy pandemic," says Dr. Sherry.

Track your progress

Goals can provide direction in our lives that are swirling with uncertainty due to the pandemic.



How do you follow through on your goals? For some, the pursuit of their resolutions doesn't last long into the near year. First, Dr. Sherry (pictured left) recommends tracking your progress. He suggests downloading an app that will help you monitor your work towards achieving that goal.

Try to create a plan for how you will accomplish your goal. Dr. Sherry says that figuring out the details beforehand makes you more likely to follow through on your goal. For example, if you want to eat healthier, figure out what kind of food you want to eat, when you will eat it and where you will eat it.

"We know that people who formulate these little action plans, who think through these 'if, then' sequences have a much higher chance of following through on their goals," he says.

Another critical factor, according to Dr. Sherry, is surrounding yourself with a strong support network. For those working on their sobriety, spend time with those who support your abstinence.

Make goals personal

As for deciding on goals you want to accomplish this year, be true to yourself, he says.

“Pick out goals that reflect your personal values, that match your personal interests, as opposed to feeling like you’re picking out your goals based on pressure from other people,” he says.

Remember to be kind to yourself as we enter the new year, especially when it comes to new year’s resolutions. It’s hard to say what the new year will have in store as humanity navigates the pandemic, so try to be compassionate.

“You can plan a pretty picnic, but you cannot predict the weather,” Dr. Sherry said.