

[39% of Americans made New Year's resolutions in 2022.](#) The most [popular category](#) people set for the new year is to improve their health. Many of those resolutions involved eating healthier, exercising more, and losing weight. Studies show only about [8% of people actually achieve their resolutions](#) and [64% of people give up on their resolutions within a month](#), which explains why [Quitter's Day](#) is the second Friday in January. This is often due to the resolutions being restrictive, unrealistic, and rooted in shame.

The term "resolution" does not allow room for flexibility. It is restrictive and implies that it must be done perfectly. This can cause anxiety and distress which is an unsustainable motivator. Instead of setting "resolutions" I encourage you to set "intentions". Intentions are broader and leave more room for growth. They act more as a guide to achieve more joy in life rather than something you feel obligated to do out of shame.

Another important part of intentions is that they come from within. Throughout each day we receive a number of external messages about what we should do. It can be hard to navigate our desires to learn what we actually want to do vs. what we think we should want to do. One way to filter through the outside noise is to think about your values. The intention that you set should be something you are happy doing as well as something you don't feel guilty about if you *don't* do it. Reflect on your successes of the past year and the things you did that made you happy, and set an intention to do more of that.

After the winter holidays, fitness and diet companies begin to bombard the public with messaging focused on weight loss, quick-fix fitness plans, and magic pills. These advertisements are framed as empowering and health-promoting, but really they are judgemental and deteriorate body image so consumers feel they need to change (and spend money to do so) in order to feel worthy.

Because of society's unfounded belief that weighing less and being in a smaller body is synonymous with health, these companies prey on those who have "failed" weight loss. The companies make individuals believe that they have lacked discipline, or that they are just not using the right formula. They ignore the fact that health isn't weight-based and that weight is not a

choice. A person's health and weight often have more to do with the systems they have lived in rather than their personal choices.

Knowing that weight does not affect health can free you from an unattainable goal. [Over 90% of people who lose weight gain back the pounds they lost](#), and oftentimes, people end up weighing more than when they started the diet. By ditching the “weight loss” goal this year, you can better spend your time, energy, and money on trying health-promoting behaviors.

1. Practice Gratitude: Practice gratitude for the small moments of the day such as a warm cup of coffee or a cozy blanket. If you feel up for it, practicing gratitude for your body can be a great way to improve your relationship with your body. Take a few minutes to write the things you like about your body or the things you like that your body can do. For example, you like that your arms can hug, and your face can communicate your emotions.
2. Detox your social media: Social media can be powerful. It has the ability to affect our mood and how we view the world. Clean up your feed by unfollowing accounts that you don't align with. Instead, replace them with people who inspire you. Challenge yourself to follow a diverse group of people. Whether you do a mass rehaul of your feeds or vow to unfollow those who make you feel bad little by little, over time, you will notice a positive difference when you are scrolling.
3. Practice Joyful Movement: If you feel like the gym is a chore, but you feel guilty for skipping, maybe it is time to reevaluate your relationship with movement. If whatever movement you have practiced in 2022 is not something you find yourself looking forward to, consider a different movement practice. If you are over running, but love getting your heart-rate up, try cycling. If you are feeling burnt-out and nothing sounds enjoyable, maybe taking intentional time off of exercise is what you need. During this time you can try other self-care activities to reduce stress while you think about what movement might feel best to you when you feel ready to try again.
4. Change your eating habits: There are plenty of ways to change your eating habits without being restrictive. Drinking more water, honoring your hunger (and cravings), and eating more fruit and vegetables are a few ideas that have nothing to do with weight loss. Some other ideas

include learning to cook a new recipe, picking up a food you have never tried before from the grocery, or trying a new cuisine at a restaurant.

There are so many options of intentions to set to improve health, wellness, and happiness in the new year. The best part is, weight loss does not have to be part of the plan. If you have a loved one who is struggling with an eating disorder or disordered thoughts and is not yet in treatment, please get them help. There is no such thing as not being "sick enough". Eating disorders are treated with a combination of therapy, nutrition education, and medical care. Reach out to info@mindbodycoopchicago.com and learn more about our dietitian Grace, who wrote this blog!