The latest neuroscience research suggests spreading resolutions out over time is the best approach.

Willpower, like a bicep, can only exert itself so long before it gives out; it’s an extremely limited mental resource. Given its limitations, New Year’s resolutions are exactly the wrong way to change our behavior. It makes no sense to try to quit smoking and lose weight at the same time, or to clean the apartment and give up wine in the same month. Instead, we should respect the feebleness of self-control, and spread our resolutions out over the entire year. Human routines are stubborn things, which helps explain why 88% of all resolutions end in failure, according to a 2007 survey of over 3,000 people conducted by the British psychologist Richard Wiseman. Bad habits are hard to break—and they’re impossible to break if we try to break them all at once.

Some simple tricks can help. The first step is self-awareness: The only way to fix willpower flaws is to know about them. Only then can the right mental muscles get strengthened, making it easier to succeed at our annual ritual of self-improvement.

The brain area largely responsible for willpower, the prefrontal cortex, is located just behind the forehead. While this bit of tissue has greatly expanded during human evolution, it probably hasn’t expanded enough. That’s because the prefrontal cortex has many other things to worry about besides New Year’s resolutions. For instance, scientists have discovered that this chunk of cortex is also in charge of keeping us focused, handling short-term memory and solving abstract problems. Asking it to lose weight is often asking it to do one thing too many.

In one experiment, led by Baba Shiv at Stanford University, several dozen undergraduates were divided into two groups. One group was given a two-digit number to remember, while the second group was given a seven-digit number. Then they were told to walk down the hall, where they were presented with two different snack options: a slice of chocolate cake or a bowl of fruit salad.

Here’s where the results get weird. The students with seven digits to remember were nearly twice as likely to choose the cake as students given two digits. The reason, according to Prof. Shiv, is that those extra numbers took up valuable space in the brain—they were a “cognitive load”—making it that much harder to resist a decadent dessert. In other words, willpower is so weak, and the prefrontal cortex is so overtaxed, that all it takes is five extra bits of information before the brain starts to give in to temptation.

This helps explain why, after a long day at the office, we’re more likely to indulge in a pint of ice cream, or eat one too many slices of leftover pizza. (In fact, one study by researchers at the University of Michigan found that just walking down a crowded city street was enough to reduce measures of self-control, as all the stimuli stressed out the cortex.) A tired brain, preoccupied with its problems, is going to struggle to resist what it wants, even when what it wants isn’t what we need.

Click here to read the rest of this article.
# What’s Trending

**Fitness:**

*Top Fitness Trend of 2014:* [Click here](#) to learn more about the top trend of 2014: high-intensity interval training.

**App of the Month:**

*Way of Life:* This app is the ultimate way to build or break habits. Simply add items to your “journal” and every day the app will ask you “yes” or “no.” The trend tab allows you to see a graph of how you are doing.

**Health:**

*12 Healthy Habits Program:* [Click here](#) for 12 habits to challenge yourself with this year, one month at a time.

**Beauty:**

*52 New Year’s Beauty Resolutions:* [Click here](#) for 52 easy ideas (one for each week) to help make you even more beautiful this year.

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**PARKING**

Wellness Center parking permits for the 2013 – 2014 year are available in the Sales Office. Permits have been prorated to $48 and are valid through August 15, 2014. Visit the Sales Office on the 2nd floor for more details. You must have your license plate number with you at time of purchase. Students and Coral Gables employees are not eligible to purchase a Wellness Center permit.

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FREE STUFF!!

**Cycle 101**

Want to try a studio cycling class but you don’t know where to start? Now you can try a FREE afternoon beginner class! You must be a Wellness Center member or a paying guest to participate. Classes are every Wednesday from 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. and Thursday from 11:15 – 12:00 p.m.

**Cycle & Yoga**

Limited time offer! From January 20th – January 26th members only may participate in a free cycle or yoga class. ONLY 1 class per person, space available.

**Community Classes**

Limited time offer! From February 1st – February 7th members and non-members may participate in a community class of their choice (some restrictions apply). ONLY 1 class per person, space available. The following Community Classes are exempt from the free trial offer: Youth Aquatics, Pilates, Cooking, and CPR.

**Meditation Classes**

There is more to fitness than cardio and weightlifting. Take advantage of a free meditation class to work on your overall mental health. Registration for this class is required. Contact the Sales Office for details (305-284-5433) or [register online](#). Join us for our first class on Thursday, February 20th from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Push-Ups with Elevated Feet

Muscles worked: chest primarily, shoulders and triceps additionally.

Step 1: Lie face down on the floor with your hands a little wider than shoulder width apart and place your feet on top of a flat bench (the higher the bench the higher the resistance). This is your starting position.

Step 2: Inhale as you lower yourself until your chest is about 2-3 inches from the floor.

Step 3: Return your body to the starting position by exhaling and pressing against the floor.

Repeat for the desired set of repetitions.

Variations: for a balance challenge, try using an exercise ball.

Click here to watch our YouTube video of this exercise.

Vegetarian Stir Fry

Going meatless at least once a week may reduce your risk of chronic preventable conditions like cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity. Try this simple vegetarian stir fry for a flavorful meat alternative.

Ingredients:
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups mixed vegetables (carrot, peas, bell pepper, mushrooms, water chestnuts, etc.)
- 1/2 cup sliced onion
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/2 cup water

Directions:
1. Combine the cornstarch, water and garlic powder. Add the mixed veggies and onion and toss to coat.
2. Heat the oil over medium heat and stir-fry the vegetables until tender. Add the broccoli and stir-fry 3-5 minutes, until tender.
3. Mix the remaining ingredients together in a small bowl and add to the pan. Cook, stirring, another two minutes before serving.

Source & Nutritional Information

My New Year’s Resolution is to follow through with my New Year’s Resolutions.
COMMUNITY CLASSES

The Herbert Wellness Center has something for everyone! You don’t have to be a member to take advantage of the many programs we have to offer. From Martial Arts to swim classes, you are bound to find something you enjoy. Click here for a list of all available Community Classes.

Pilates registration: Monday 1/6 – Friday 1/10.
Youth swim registration: Monday 1/13 – Sunday 1/19.
Other class registration: Monday 1/27 – Friday 2/7.

STUDIO CYCLING AND YOGA

Get unlimited access to Studio Cycling and Yoga classes with a semester pass! Passes will go on sale beginning Monday, January 6th for both Studio Cycling and Yoga. Prices are listed below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Studio Cycling</th>
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<tr>
<td>Student Member</td>
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<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Student Member</td>
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Not sure if you are ready to commit to a full semester? Pay for a one-time pass and come back to the Sales Office within 7 days to credit that pass towards the purchase of a full semester pass!

Cooking Classes

Perfect for date nights or just a fun night out with friends! All classes run from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Check out the upcoming classes below:

Wednesday 1/29............Laissez Les Bon Temps Roulez – New Orleans style cooking
Tuesday 2/11..............A Love Affair with Sweets

Want to plan a private cooking class for your next event? Contact Elena Fajardo e.fajardo1@umiami.edu for details.

CPR and First Aid Classes

We offer basic CPR, AED and First Aid training as well as a more advanced CPR for Health Care Providers. Class dates listed below:

Heartsaver CPR with AED:
   Wednesday, 1/22  5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers:
   Friday, 2/28  3:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.
First Aid:
   Wednesday 2/19  5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

The above classes have limited space and are available for online registration. You must pay at time of registration. If you wish to cancel, you must do so at least 24 hours in advance. No refunds will be given for cancellation within 24 hours.

Hey UM faculty & staff!

Walking ‘Canes is now part of Well ‘Canes Incentive Program

In addition to shedding unwanted pounds, reducing the risk of heart disease, and the chance to win some exceptional prizes, Walking ‘Canes can also earn you points toward your 2014 Well ‘Canes Incentives Program goal.

Walking ‘Canes is a 12-week program aimed at advancing your well-being by encouraging you to become more active and increase your daily step count. By using a pedometer daily, you can track the number of steps you take each day and increase them weekly in order to receive points. At the conclusion of the program, the top ten participants will be invited to a sit-down lunch with UM President Donna Shalala and the top two participants will receive a round-trip, plan-ahead ticket on American Airlines. As an added bonus, Well ‘Canes Incentives Program participants will receive 500 points, bringing them closer to earning their $300 cash incentive, by simply completing the 12-week Walking ‘Canes program.
I’m going to be a member of the majority: my New Year’s resolution is to lose weight. I know the Wellness Center offers a bunch of programs and services to help me out. I just don’t know where to get started or what’s realistic. Ideally, I would’ve liked to have started before the holidays but that just didn’t happen. So now I, like 99% of the population, will be starting this January. Any advice you can give would be greatly appreciated.

Yes, you are part of the majority and yes, it is overwhelming. You didn’t state in your question if you’ve already been working out and fell off the wagon during the holiday time or if you’re completely starting from scratch this January. For the sake of argument, I’m going to pretend it’s the former and not the latter (in my world, everyone LOVES to workout!) Statistics have shown that a small amount of people maintain their fitness New Year’s resolutions by the end of February (10-20%). That’s an overwhelming majority that fall of the wagon. To set yourself up for success, try these suggestions:

1. Realistic Resolutions. If you’ve got 30-50 lbs. to lose, it’s not realistic to expect to be 30 lbs. lighter by the end of January. A safe amount of weight to lose per week is 1-2 lbs. Therefore, BEST case scenario is you’ll be 30 lbs. lighter by mid-April. Yes, mid-April. There’s no magic pill or diet that will cause you to go to bed at one weight and wake up significantly lighter. It’s called hard work and dedication.

2. Process-Oriented Solutions. What this means is instead of setting a goal to lose a specific amount of weight by a specific date, set a deadline instead for behavior change. If you tend to be a TV-snacker or a study-muncher, why not say, I’m not going to eat past 7 p.m. Or I’m going to make sure I walk 10,000 steps each day. These are behavioral changes that are good for you in the long run and will help you work towards your bigger goals. They aren’t restrictive either and will more than likely make you a better planner.

3. Set Short-term Goals. When someone asks me what I’m doing for spring break or summer vacation I tell them I can’t plan my life that far in advance. I get overwhelmed and panic and usually decide to not do anything. If I set something more short-term, it will be less overwhelming and reinforce good behaviors because I can reach those goals quickly as opposed to later on.

4. Tell Someone. If you are the only person who knows your goals or what you’re trying to do, who will hold you accountable? Granted if you’re working with a personal trainer that’s totally different because this person knows your goals AND you’re paying them so there’s a financial commitment to the equation. Accountability is a very critical aspect to your success.

If you follow these suggestions, I have no doubt that you will be part of the 20% that keep up with their resolutions well into the year. Best of luck to you!!

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