

UW Health: Setting goals instead of resolutions the key to a better 2022, says UW Health psychologist

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MADISON, Wis. – As we near the two-year mark of the pandemic, many people feel like life has been on hold. A [recent global study](#) found that 80% of people have been negatively impacted during the last year, with many struggling financially (29%); suffering from declining mental health (28%); lacking career motivation (25%); and feeling disconnected from their own lives (23%). In fact, three-quarters of people around the world reported feeling “stuck” personally and professionally.

According to Shilagh Mirgain, distinguished psychologist, UW Health, the blank slate of a new year can be a great opportunity for people to reset and create a different kind of future for themselves. She offers the following four building blocks to help people move beyond basic New Year’s resolutions to creating goals that can make 2022 a little brighter for us all:

- **Reflect on this past year** - Identify and examine what went right and what was challenging by asking yourself what you want to bring with you into 2022? What do you want to leave behind? What brings you joy and a sense of fulfillment? What would make you a healthier you?
- **Envision your best year** - Create a vision statement or word for 2022. Picture your life one year from now and envision how you want to feel. You could write it down as a day in the life of you – who are you around, how is your work life, how do you experience your body and your health, finances, emotions, spirit. Consider picking one word that captures this image as your intention for the 12 months ahead.
- **Set some realistic goals** - Set a few goals that you want to work towards. Goals are about who you are becoming and not about just giving yourself more

to do. Goals need to be for you, it's your life. If you are doing it for someone else, take it off your list. Goal setting should be energy giving not energy draining and should excite you enough to make these goals happen. Once you are clear about your goal, break it down into measurable steps. Think about creating daily, weekly, or monthly action steps that move you in the direction of your larger vision for the year.

- **Plan and anticipate obstacles** - Lastly, plan for the challenges that could arise so you can anticipate how you will overcome them. Have a support team in place to encourage you when you feel like giving up. The main reasons people fail include a failure to plan for setbacks, having unrealistic expectations for their goals and not making a commitment to what they are working towards. Revisit your goals from time to time to keep them top of mind, celebrate successes, adjust accordingly and recommit to action steps to stay on track.