

How Kids With Learning and Attention Issues Can Set and Stick to New Year's Goals

Article By: Lexi Walters Wright, Understood.org

With the holiday season now behind us, many of us have started to look forward and set new resolutions for the year. This article offers some practical tips and suggestions on how to help your child set and stick with their goals.

At a Glance

- Making New Year's resolutions can empower your child to change a behavior or work on a new skill.
- Good New Year's resolutions are thoughtfully made with reasonable end goals in mind.
- Progress charts and regular check-ins can help kids keep their resolutions on track.

Ideally, New Year's resolutions teach kids how to set and work steadily toward goals. That can be especially valuable for those who have learning and attention issues. But your child may need some help creating meaningful goals she'll be able to stick with.

Creating a New Year's Goal

However appealing an end goal is, it's easy to get sidetracked. Help your child craft a sustainable plan by following the same SMART guidelines you would use for an IEP goal: Make sure it's:

- **Specific:** The resolution should include your child's goal, the skill she's working on and how she'll achieve it: "To become a better trumpet player by our May concert, I'll practice 30 minutes a day."
- **Measurable:** She should track her progress—on a chart or in regular check-ins with you.
- **Attainable:** The goal should be ambitious but realistic—something that will stretch your child's skills but not overwhelm her.
- **Results-oriented:** The resolution should explain what she'll be able to do once she reaches her goal. For example: "Studying with a tutor twice a week will help me consistently get As in math."
- **Time-bound:** Your child's resolution should specify a reasonable time frame and can include mini-goals along the way (mini-successes can be very motivating).

And another big must:

- **Relevance:** Your child has to *want* to set and reach this goal! She should feel eager and committed.



How Kids With Learning and Attention Issues Can Set and Stick to New Year's Goals...con't

What a Good Resolution Looks Like

Your child's specific goals will depend on her challenges, abilities and interests. Here are a few examples of how you might help her refine her ideas.

Social Skills Resolution

Beginning idea: "I'll be the most popular kid in my class."

Resolution: "This year, I'll make more friends. Twice a month, I'll invite someone over from school or Scouts."

Academic Resolution

Beginning idea: "I'm going to get all As this year."

Resolution: "In January, I'll get a B or better on every science quiz by studying at least 45 minutes for each one and asking my teacher for advice on studying."

Athletic Resolution

Beginning idea: "I'll start running and make the varsity track team this spring."

Resolution: "To learn to run, I'll download a training app. Then I'll practice for a Valentine's Day 5K. If I like it, I'll find a 10K over summer break."

Working Toward a New Year's Goal

As your child works on achieving his resolution, she'll also be building important skills like:

- Self-reflection: "How do I want to improve this year?"
- Self-advocacy: "What do I need to do to help me reach my goal?"
- Self-awareness: "Am I making progress toward my goal?"
- Problem-solving and self-control: "What can I do to get back on track?"
- Self-esteem: "How does achieving my goal make me feel?"

Encourage her to step back and ask herself questions like these—or even discuss the answers with you—along the way. They'll help her stay on track and get more out of the experience.

Helping Your Child Stick With It

However good her intentions—and her plan—your child may sometimes have trouble persevering. These tips can help you help her:

- **If your child agrees, consider joining her.** You'll make each other more accountable. "I'm also looking to exercise more this year. How about we swim together at the Y every Saturday morning?"
- **Don't nag.** In addition to the regular progress checks you've built in, ask questions and offer reminders—but in ways your child can accept. Some kids might respond well to: "I know you wanted to have someone over twice a month. Has that happened yet for February?" Others might do better with, "We don't have any plans this weekend, if you want to have a teammate over."
- **Share your own experiences.** Be honest about what did and didn't help you with *your* New Year's resolutions. "I'm so glad I joined the library book club last year. It really helped me reach my daily page goal."
- **Make it meaningful.** Let your child work hard at her resolution. If she doesn't achieve it, you can help make sure that her struggle is motivating, not paralyzing. Talk through how things went off-track and what she might do differently next time.

Reference: Walters Wright, Lexi. *How Kids with Learning and Attention Issues Can Set and Stick to New Years Goals*. (n.d.). Retrieved on January 23, 2017, from <https://www.understood.org/en/family/events-outings/holidays-celebrations/how-kids-with-learning-and-attention-issues-can-set-and-stick-to-new-years-goals>



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Thursday, February 9th, 2017
10:00 -12:00 pm
The Access Lab 3, 5th Floor, 141 Dundas St.

For further information and to register by **Monday, February 6th, 2017**, please contact:
Megan Papadakos,
ATN Access Inc.
Volunteer and Community Coordinator,
m.papadakos@atn.on.ca
519.433.7950 x 523

Inspirational Quotes – Issue # 64

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Throughout history, society has been influenced and shaped by the many great contributions made by individuals with learning disabilities. These people demonstrate the strength and perseverance to be true to themselves and strive for their full potential. We hope their words inspire and motivate you to reach for your true potential.

"I performed poorly at school, when I went, that is, and was perceived as dumb because of my dyslexia. I still have difficulty reading. I have to focus very hard at going left to right, left to right, otherwise my eye simply wanders to the bottom of the page."

—Tommy Hilfiger, *Fashion Designer, (Dyslexia)*

Tommy Hilfiger credits his learning disability for his success in the fashion industry. Because he has never received formal training, he is able to approach his designs differently than others in the industry. Since 1985, Hilfiger has been a well-known name in the fashion world. His design style is often described as "All-American," his signature is the use of red, white and blue in his designs.

Tommy Hilfiger recently partnered with an organization named "Runway of Dreams." The mission of this non-profit organization is to adapt mainstream fashion to meet the needs of children who are differently-abled. The clothing line features modifications such as magnetic buttons, and clothing with adjustable waist, pant length and sleeve length that make clothing more accessible to children with disabilities. Runway of Dreams is available for children's clothing currently, but the founder of the organization indicates that there is hope to expand to women and men's lines in the future.

Reference: It really does pay to be inclusive!. Retrieved Online: January 26, 2017. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3681481/Tommy-Hilfiger-s-collection-adaptive-clothing-designed-children-special-needs-seller-fashion-brand.html>

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Are you interested in helping to make a difference in someone's life? Do you have talents and skills that you would be willing to share? If so, being an ATN volunteer may be just for you!

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Opportunities exist in our academic upgrading lab, assistive technology lab, employment services, class room assistance and drop-in computer lab.

For more information and to get involved, please call us at

519 - 433-7950 ext. 372.
or visit our website at www.atn.on.ca



Contact Us:



LD Edge Newsletter
c/o ATN Access Inc.
504-141 Dundas Street
London, ON Canada N6A 1G3

If you have any information, articles or submissions to share with us, please contact us at anytime.

Phone: 519-433-7950 ext 372

Fax: 519-433-0282

E-mail: info@atn.on.ca

Web: www.atn.on.ca

We hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the LD Edge Newsletter and that you are looking forward to the next issue.



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If we give them an edge...
They may give us one!