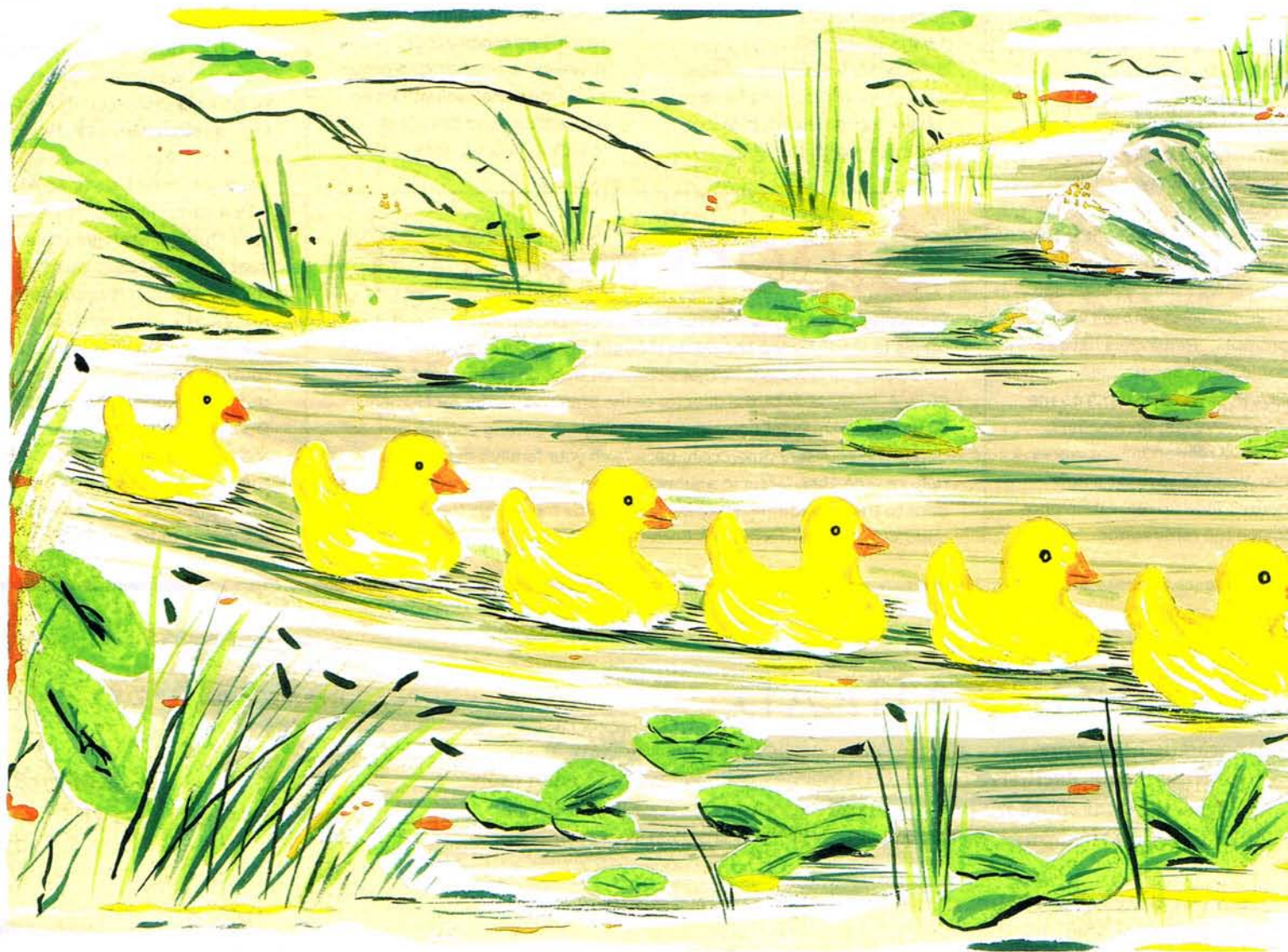


# Secrets of Resolution Success

Make 2007 the year you get your ducks in a row. Just follow these simple strategies.

BY ARIANNE COHEN • ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN CRONIN



**P**lenty of people vow to improve their lives each year—to lose those last 10 pounds, be a better spouse, or excavate the paper-pile landfill that once was the home office. Four out of five responders to a new LIFE/AOL Coaches poll said they were making a New Year's

resolution, and a very optimistic 62 percent planned to stick with it for at least a year. As the first week of 2007 draws to a close, however, chances are you feel in danger of letting yours slip. (Which is why Jenny Craig doesn't need to resolve to make more money each

year.) The problem usually isn't a lack of desire, it's a lack of strategy and execution. We asked experts to draw up concrete plans for achieving some of the most popular goals. Whether you're hoping to lose a dress size or tack a zero onto your bank-account balance, it's time to take the first step toward success.

## Get Things Done

"In order to make your resolutions work," says M.J. Ryan, the author of *This Year I Will*, "they have to be goals that you really want to achieve in an emotionally powerful way." Pick a couple of objectives with huge potential daily returns—a new career, a better relationship, a fulfilling hobby. Once you've committed, identify a specific way to measure your daily progress. For example, if you want to be more patient, track how often you lose your temper with the kids each day. Next, surround yourself with prompts. "Reminders have to come from the outside," says Ryan. A sticky note on the microwave can do wonders. Positive reinforcement works too. Want to save for a new house? Tape up real estate photos on the refrigerator.

## Earn More Money

"A home business is a way to grow income with minimal risk," says Wilma Goldstein of the U.S. Small Business Administration. Join the more than 700,000 people who run home businesses on eBay. "Warm up by selling gifts you don't want," says Brad Schepp, a coauthor of *How eBay Really Works*. Items valued at \$15 or more are worth the effort.

## Find Love

Have a few bad dates sent you slinking back to your sofa, Häagen-Dazs in hand? That's because first dates (and singles' bars) involve high-pressure, unnatural scenarios. Instead, "look for people in bright or daytime environments surrounded by others, where everyone is actually doing something," says Ken Page, the founder of the event-hosting company Deeper Dating. Start by thinking about your interests. Then resolve to join two organizations with those values—whether a group of soup-kitchen volunteers or a bike club—and devote at least four hours a week to them.

## Lose Weight

As you probably know all too well, some 95 percent of diets fail. "When people shoot for a goal weight, it just doesn't work," says Lindsay Dunlap, a weight-loss trainer at the Sports Club/LA. The solution? Work toward something enticing. Says Dunlap, "I had one client who wanted to become a swing dancer. He lost 30 pounds." Other options include getting yourself in shape to take a bike trip, do a half-marathon (running, walking, or both), or go on a cross-country skiing vacation. Not athletically inclined? "Aim to knock a notch off your belt or to fit into a certain pair of jeans," says Dunlap. Start your New Year by scheduling three rock-solid exercise appointments into every week so that you establish a workout routine. "Having a plan is definitely important," says Dunlap. "Every day, all day, everyone thinks, *I need to do this, this, and this*. But if you don't put it on your calendar, it's going to be blown off."

## Sleep Better

Promising yourself you'll hit the sack before *Letterman* never quite seems to work. "Sleep should be thought of as prioritized time in bed, with a sleep and wake time that's constant throughout the week," says Clete A. Kushida, M.D., the director of the Stanford Center for Human Sleep Research. Right now, you're probably not getting enough rest. To determine your schedule, count back from your family's morning departure time, then factor in a shower, coffee, and Matt Lauer. Eight hours prior to that is bedtime. The payoff? You'll be more alert (no more midday slump), perform tasks better—and probably be less moody, too.

### LIFEPOLL

## CHANGES AHEAD

Americans have some very simple but specific goals for the New Year. According to this exclusive LIFE/AOL Coaches poll, we want to earn more, fear less, have far more frequent romantic encounters, and lose a lot of clutter around the house. Here's to taking out the trash and starting anew.

#### 1. DID YOU MAKE A RESOLUTION AT THE BEGINNING OF 2006?

Yes	52%
No	48%

#### 2. DO YOU PLAN TO MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION FOR 2007?

Yes	81%
No	19%

#### 3. WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER-ONE GOAL FOR '07?

Lose weight	31%
Maintain a healthier lifestyle	19%
Improve my relationship/romantic life	12%
Get organized	8%
Earn more money	8%
I'm not making a resolution	7%
Focus on spirituality	5%
Start a new career	4%

- Spend more time with family
- Make home improvements
- Try a new hobby
- Volunteer

#### 4. IS ONE OF YOUR RESOLUTIONS TO EARN MORE MONEY?

Yes	68%
No	32%

#### 5. IF SO, HOW DO YOU PLAN TO DO THAT?

Miscellaneous	34%
Get a new job	19%
Find a new career path	14%
Ask for a raise/promotion	9%
Play the lottery	9%
Start own business	8%
Get a second job	7%

# Remake a Room

**That messy catchall room** in your home doesn't need to be cleaned; it needs to be repurposed. Begin by imagining your dream space—a home gym, a family theater, a scrapbooking area, anything. New York City interior designer Philip Gorrivan suggests a bookshelf-lined room with a main work table: "It can be the nerve center of the house—a computer room and library, where children can do their homework and play." Once you've envisioned your perfect space, empty out the room, then paint it. "You want to pick bold colors to make it a fun and inviting environment," says designer Heidi Karpa, a host at [www.HGTVKitchenDesign.com](http://www.HGTVKitchenDesign.com). "Say, tangerine orange walls with a yellow ceiling." Finally, accessorize with bright curtains, throw pillows, and whimsical touches.



# Plan Your Year

**Are your vacation days** becoming a source of stress, rather than relaxation, as they go to waste? This year, set your leisure dates in stone and let life's responsibilities adapt to your agenda. "Sit down with the people you want to go on vacation with, and figure out what you want to accomplish," says time-management expert Debra Lund of FranklinCovey, the Salt Lake City-based productivity-consulting firm. Are you looking for tranquility? Family adventure? Cultural education? Choose your destination accordingly, and block off the appropriate travel dates. On your calendar, "pencil in when you need to book the flight and the hotel, and ask for time off from work" 30 to 60 days before your departure, says Lund. ■

## Celebrity Resolutions

Leonardo DiCaprio, Maggie Gyllenhaal, and others reveal their goals for '07 on [www.LIFE.com](http://www.LIFE.com).



### 6. WHAT HOUSEHOLD CHORE DO YOU WANT TO TACKLE?

File or toss out old paperwork	41%
Clean out the garage	21%
Bring old clothes to Goodwill	20%
Organize family photos	18%

### 7. WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE MORE SEX IN THE NEW YEAR? IF SO, HOW OFTEN?

One to two times a week	49%
Every day	23%
One to two times a month	15%
At least on major holidays and anniversaries	14%

### 8. WHAT NEGATIVE EMOTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO SWEAR OFF FOR GOOD?

Fear	28%
Anger	26%
Regret	21%

Guilt	14%
Envy	11%

### 9. WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO MORE OF TO HELP YOU RELEASE STRESS?

More "me" time	33%
Prayer/meditation	29%
Get together with friends/family more often	21%
Yoga	17%

### 10. HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU'LL KEEP YOUR RESOLUTION?

I'll never break my resolution	33%
One year	29%
One month	24%
One week	8%
One day	6%

Internet users weighed in with more than 7,600 responses to the LIFE/AOL Coaches poll, conducted online between November 20 and December 3.