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## Surefire Ways to Make Your Resolutions Stick

It may seem like a mystery why our New Year's resolutions never stick. We're so passionate about being healthier on January 1, but by April (or earlier) we find ourselves back to our old habits.

Research is just starting to show why we do what we do. What may seem like a snap decision actually requires three separate factors.

BJ Fogg, a researcher at Stanford University's Persuasive Technology Lab, found that three discrete factors—trigger, ability and motivation—are necessary for an action to take place. Using the example of a ringing cell

phone, Fogg explains that when the phone rings, that's the trigger to pick it up and say hello. But think about the last few times you didn't answer your phone. Were you in the shower? In a meeting? These reasons speak to your ability to pick up the phone.

But what if you saw who was calling and you just didn't feel like talking to them? That speaks to motivation. You weren't motivated to pick up the phone, even though it rang (trigger) and you had it in your hand (ability). If all three elements exist, however, you're likely to spend the next few minutes on the phone in a conversation.

BJ Fogg's trigger, ability and motivation model can be applied to any successful behavior change, even New Year's resolutions.

Let's say, for example, you resolve to be healthier in 2014 by adding breakfast to your routine. To make sure your resolution lasts through the year, start with a trigger.

### Trigger:

New behaviors can be hard to stick to because you've forgotten to do them. If you're not used to



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*NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with PROJECT: PFC's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.*

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### **Trigger:**

New behaviors can be hard to stick to because you just forget to do them. If you're not used to eating breakfast, chances are you'll remember to do it sometime between 10 a.m. and lunch when your stomach starts to growl. So how can you trigger yourself to eat breakfast?

The best triggers can inspire your whole family to be more healthful. "Leave the cereal on the counter, or leave a spoon by your keys to remind you to grab a yogurt," said Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Trina Robertson. "If you have a programmable coffee maker, you can easily make a latte on your way out the door so you get some protein and nutrients with your coffee. Cues (or triggers) are just things that will remind you and make it easier."

Seeing healthy foods on the counter and in the pantry, refrigerator or freezer will trigger your family to eat them, as well as provide the ability to eat better.



## **Ability:**

It's hard to eat healthfully if there isn't healthy food in the house. If you're the person who does the shopping for your household, you can have a big impact on health by using these prepared shopping lists and making sure healthy food is always on hand.

Store pre-washed and cut vegetables in clear containers in the refrigerator. They'll be easier to see and grab when you're hungry. Milk, cheese and yogurt are essential to a healthy diet, so make sure you have grab and go options in the fridge, too.

The same goes for eating breakfast. It'll be easier to eat breakfast if you stock your house with good morning foods. Plan on easy breakfast recipes for busy weekday mornings and try special recipes for the weekend. You can find plenty of ideas and inspiration on the Breakfast page of this website, as well as our Healthy Breakfast Ideas for Better Days board on Pinterest.

By keeping your home and office stocked with healthy food you are another step closer to keeping your breakfast resolution. Leaving a spoon by your keys won't do you any good if there isn't any yogurt in the fridge!

## **Motivation:**

If your New Year's resolution is to eat more healthfully, you've already demonstrated some motivation. But there are lots of things you can do to keep that motivation high. Keeping your resolutions TINY, and saying 'Yes' instead of 'No' helps you meet your goals right away, providing motivation to keep you going.

"Concentrate on new behaviors you can start, like eating breakfast, rather than ones you have to stop," Robertson said. "If you concentrate on the good habits, you'll find you're having success and you'll be able to make other changes."

While trigger and ability are the crux of behavior change, keeping motivation high is important too. Give yourself small, daily rewards for staying on track with your new, tiny habit.

Setting up a support system with other friends or colleagues, whether in person or online, can also provide motivation to keep you on track for your healthy resolution.

Using behavior science to help you stick to your New Year's resolutions will ensure a happy, healthier year ahead.

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