

8 Smart (and Fun!) New Year's Resolutions Kids Can Make

Help your child choose a specific, achievable resolution to set him up for success in the New Year.

By **Kim Conte**

If you typically start the New Year fresh by making resolutions, consider getting your kids in on the tradition this year. Not only can it be a valuable teaching moment about setting goals and sticking to them, but the practice of choosing an achievable resolution for the new year can be a fun way for kids to develop their communication and decision-making skills. "Parents can start by explaining what a resolution is and give examples of ones they have set in past years," says Dr. Kristen Eastman, PsyD, a pediatric clinical psychologist at Cleveland Children's Hospital. "Asking your children for ideas and helping them evaluate the options together is really important."

Just keep in mind that resolutions should always be discussed in a positive way with children: for example, saying "I'm going to do this..." instead of "I'm going to STOP doing this..."

"You don't want your child to feel like something is wrong with them now," Dr. Eastman explains. "Rather, frame the conversation as 'something that could be better if we did this.'" Also, take care to help your child pick a resolution that is both achievable and specific. If your child suggests well-intentioned but vague ideas like "Be a better friend" or "Be healthier," try to help her filter those ideas into tangible actions that can be done every day, either by herself or together as a family: "Help a friend with math homework before every test" or "Spend 30 minutes outside each day."

Here are eight suggestions for good resolutions that kids can make:

- **Instead of:** "I'm going to eat healthier."**Suggest:** "I'm going to drink two glasses of milk each day instead of soda or juice." Or, "I'm going to eat two pieces of fruit at lunch each day."

These are just two examples of healthy resolutions—your child's should be tailored to his individual needs. "Target the area you and your child need to improve upon and discuss why that is important for you," Dr. Eastman says. So, if you want to eat less fast food, talk about what you are going to eat instead. If you need to eat more veggies, agree on a specific number for the week, and so on.

- **Instead of:** "I'm going to [exercise](#) more."**Suggest:** "I'm going to join a soccer team." Or, "I'm going to go to yoga class with Mom on Saturdays."

Increasing physical activity is always a good resolution, but Dr. Eastman says the word "exercise" can be boring. "If you make it sound fun, it's more likely to stick."

- **Instead of:** "We're going to cut down on screen time."**Suggest:** "We're going to read for 30 minutes before bed instead of watching TV."

It's not enough to simply say, "We're going to reduce screen time." Quantify how much you and your child will reduce and what you'll be doing instead.

- **Instead of:** "I'm going to help out around the house."**Suggest:** "I'm going to set the table for dinner every night." Or, "I'm going to help clean my bedroom once a week."

Committing to chores is always smart because it can make kids feel needed and useful. Plus, you'll get a little help around the house!

- **Instead of:** "I'm going to be nicer to people."**Suggest:** "I'm going to do one random act of kindness a week." Or, "I'm going to talk to one person at school I've never met each week."

Similar to #1, a social resolution should also be tailored to your child and the area they would like to improve upon. So, a shy child would likely have a

different resolution (like the latter above) than a child who's working on being nicer to other kids.

- **Instead of:** "We're going to be more eco-friendly."**Suggest:** "We're going to start a recycling program at home." Or, "we're going to shorten our showers to only five minutes to conserve water."

"As a family, decide what being green means and how to translate that to a reasonable family goal," Dr. Eastman says.

- **Instead of:** "I'm going to learn something new."**Suggest:** "I'm going to learn how to make chocolate chip cookies." Or, "I will learn how to sing."

Learning new skills is always an exciting resolution that everyone looks forward to.

- **Instead of:** "We're going to spend more quality time together."**Suggest:** "We're going to have game night every Friday." Or, "we're going to eat breakfast together on Sunday mornings after church."

Commit to spending more family time together having fun (this might be the easiest one to keep!).

Remember that when it comes to resolutions, it's important for parents to lead by example. In other words, your child is more likely to accomplish her

resolution if she sees you sticking to your own goal (which can be tough!). And don't be afraid to adjust your goals along the way if they're becoming stale or—imagine!—you actually accomplish them. There's value in teaching kids to follow through on a goal long-term, even if they need to tweak it along the way.

Now, here's the million dollar question: How do you help your child stick to his or her resolutions (and complete your own as well)? Easy, Dr. Eastman says, "Find a way to make it fun!" Maybe for your family that's tracking progress with a visual reminder, like putting marbles or cotton balls in a glass jar every time your child completes his or her goal. Or, perhaps it's having a little family competition of who can stick to their goal the longest and rewarding the winner with a special privilege. Find out what motivates your family, and go for it!