

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

New Year's Resolutions as a Family Affair

“You may delay, but time will not.”

~ Benjamin Franklin

SHOW YOUR CHILDREN that wishes can come true. It's still January—a good time to create resolutions as a family, using organizational tricks as reminders to act on them. Individual New Year's resolutions get trampled on the busy thoroughfare of our lives for several reasons. We make resolutions based on “shoulds,” like vowing to lose weight or exercise. It's also easy to break promises to ourselves. However, when we collaborate with others, we are likely to make our plans a reality.

Start by talking to your family about what they want to happen in the new year. Discussions focused on making life more rewarding can be fulfilling activities in themselves. Young children don't experience time in minutes or months, but planning together helps them construct ideas about the past and intentions about the future.

Helping to make plans empowers children. This is especially true when you schedule one-on-one parent-child time each week. Children need time alone with parents that they can count on. After decades of working with families, I'm convinced mapping out regular time alone with your child is the most important plan you can make.

You can also brainstorm ideas for the whole family. Perhaps your family would like more time playing games or going on hikes. After discussing fresh ideas for the new year, pencil plans on the calendar.

You can offer tradeoffs: “If you finish your homework early, every Wednesday we'll play a game.” If your child wants more time with Aunt Sophie, set up a date. Then check in on plans at a monthly meeting. Is the family playing more games? Are family members working together on cleanup after dinner?

Be sure to program time to check in with yourself. Since you are the hub of the family, taking care of yourself is the foundation for everyone else to prosper. Are you turning your resolutions into concrete plans? No need for guilt if you haven't. Reflecting on your intentions to get more exercise or solitude is self-nurturing. Compliment yourself on keeping those values in mind in spite of challenges.

We can keep the fire of our intentions going by detailing our mental images, like creating a lovely internal painting of what we want to do.

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