

## Are Your New Year's Resolutions Too Smart?



A few years ago, I sat down to write my New Year's resolutions and had a startling realization: I was bored by my own goals. They felt practical, achievable, and... utterly uninspiring. But I thought I was doing everything right. My goals were S.M.A.R.T.—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—the gold standard for effective goal setting. So why did they feel so lifeless?

The problem was that my goals had become too "smart," too safe. The perfectionist in me wanted to check off every box and earn my gold stars at the end of the year, so I aimed lower, scaled back my dreams, and in the process, stripped away the joy of striving for something greater.

After years of studying positive psychology, I've learned that bold, exciting goals aren't just possible—they're essential for growth. Fear often holds us back—fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of setting goals so big they feel impossible. But fear doesn't have to be the end of the story. It's time to rethink the way we set resolutions and embrace goals that inspire, challenge, and truly matter.

### The Problem with S.M.A.R.T. Goals

S.M.A.R.T. goals were first introduced in the 1980s as a framework to help individuals and organizations set clear, actionable objectives. The concept gained widespread popularity for its ability to bring structure and clarity to goal-setting. By breaking down ambitions into smaller, manageable pieces, S.M.A.R.T. goals provide a roadmap for success.

However, while the framework is undeniably effective for certain types of goals, it can also box us into the realm of the practical, limiting our ability to dream big or take risks. By prioritizing what's achievable, we often aim lower than we should, prioritizing comfort over growth. Goals like "Go to the gym three times a week" or "Save \$100 per month" are perfectly reasonable, but do they inspire? Do they challenge us to reimagine what we're truly capable of?

### A Different Approach to Goal Setting

A different approach to goal setting involves embracing a mindset of fearless positivity. This framework challenges individuals to think bigger, dream bolder, and believe that even ambitious



goals are within their reach. Rather than focusing solely on practicality, fearless positivity encourages prioritizing possibilities over limitations.

Fearless positivity doesn't dismiss structure; it reframes ambition. Instead of settling for what feels safe and achievable, it asks people to aspire to goals that truly excite and inspire. By adopting this approach, individuals open themselves to extraordinary achievements, personal growth, and a deeper sense of fulfillment. This shift fosters resilience and encourages a more optimistic outlook, redefining what's possible.

## Rewriting Resolutions with Fearless Positivity

Let's look at some common resolutions and see how they might transform when we rewrite them with an attitude of fearless positivity:

**Original Resolution:** *"Lose 10 pounds by March."*

**Fearless Positivity Rewrite:** *"Become the healthiest, strongest version of myself this year by finding activities I love and nourishing my body with joy."*

**Original Resolution:** *"Save \$1,200 this year."*

**Fearless Positivity Rewrite:** *"Build financial freedom by cultivating a mindset of abundance and exploring new ways to create wealth."*

**Original Resolution:** *"Spend more time with family."*

**Fearless Positivity Rewrite:** *"Create unforgettable moments with my loved ones by planning weekly adventures and celebrating the small, magical moments together."*

These rewritten resolutions aren't just about achieving specific outcomes; they focus on embodying a mindset that inspires action and resilience.

## The Science of Optimism

Optimism isn't just wishful thinking; it's a powerful psychological tool grounded in science. According to research, optimistic individuals are more likely to persevere in the face of challenges, achieve their goals, and enjoy better overall health and well-being. But what exactly is optimism?

The ancient Greeks had a beautifully simple definition: Optimism is the belief that your behavior matters. This idea—that our actions can shape the future—is central to fearless positivity. When we believe our efforts will make a difference, we're more likely to take bold steps toward creating the life we envision.



## How to Lean Into Fearless Positivity

**Start with the Dream, Not the Limitation:** Instead of asking, “What’s realistic?” ask, “What excites me?” Create resolutions that make your heart race and your mind expand.

**Focus on Identity, Not Outcomes:** Resolutions rooted in who you want to become are more inspiring and sustainable than those based on specific numbers or milestones.

**Embrace Setbacks as Stepping Stones:** Fearless positivity isn’t about ignoring challenges; it’s about seeing them as opportunities to grow. When obstacles arise, remind yourself that your behavior matters and keep moving forward.

**Surround Yourself with Optimism:** Positivity is contagious. Spend time with people who believe in you and your dreams, and avoid environments that reinforce fear or doubt.

## The Bottom Line

This year, don’t just set resolutions that fit neatly within the S.M.A.R.T. framework. Dare to dream bigger. Dare to lean into fearless positivity. Rewrite your goals with the belief that your behavior matters—because it does. The possibilities for 2025 are as limitless as your willingness to believe in them.

What resolutions will you rewrite today?

**Solutions EAP** provides free, short-term, and confidential counseling for employees and their families.

Call **1-800-526-3485** for information and a confidential appointment.

[www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com)