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(Picture showing cat on exercise bike with caption: "New Year's Resolutions are hard to reach sometimes")

New Year, New You and Welcome to YU

What is it about New Year's Resolutions that give them such a bad reputation? Why do we even have them? A surprisingly long-held tradition, dating back about 4,000 years to ancient Babylon. The Babylonians celebrated their New Year's (albeit in March when their crops were planted) with a 12-day long festival. During this time, they would either crown a new king or celebrate their existing ruler with ceremonies which included making promises to their pagan gods that they will return any goods or services that were due. Those who kept their promise would have good fortune for themselves and their crops for the year ahead, and you would not want to be the one who failed to keep your word!¹

Of course, nowadays, chances are you will not be worried about crop failure because you forgot to return that mower to your neighbour down the road. You will however feel the natural fear of failure in front of others (as well as yourself). We are bombarded with "New Year, New You" type advertising, pressuring us to acquire a new car or a new body. Next time you watch an advert, scroll through your Facebook,



(picture showing a gym advert with a man exercising and caption: "The New Year New You Special"- credit CrossFit)

or walk down the street, look at how many adverts play on our insecurities and FOMO (fear of missing out)! They might be subliminal messages, but when they are repeated, they stick in our minds creating a version of the ideal world in which we impulsively buy new gym membership or a car!



(picture an Audi car advert with a caption "Start your new year's resolution early"-credit Audi)

¹ The History of New Year's Resolutions, SARAH PRUITT

<https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions>

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Now, I am not saying New Year's Resolutions are a bad thing, on the contrary, it is important to set goals and improve one-self physically or mentally. What I do think is that the pressure of setting all the goals once per year at a time when everyone is coming off a holiday-high and ploughing through winter adds extra pressure. The bandwagon effect might also make you feel like you are making meaningful goals whereas they are just too vague and immeasurable and are likely to make you give up quickly.

A [Harvard Medical School article](#) about New Year's Resolutions suggests seven tips on how to help you stick to them. For me, the one thing that stood out was putting less pressure on yourself by breaking down the tasks into smaller steps which are then easily converted into habits and being grateful for/ acknowledge what you have achieved, even if it is a fraction of what you intended. You can always try again the next day.

In his personal [blog](#), Sir Richard Branson talks of importance of resolutions and goals. His main piece of advice is to write your goals down. It is a very simple tip, but one many do not do. With so much going on in our lives, we need a visual reminder. He also suggests separating your business and personal goals, then crossing them off your list once completed. He stresses that although it is advisable to share your goals with others so they can motivate and support you, ultimately you are doing it for yourself.



As a mature student, you will undoubtedly have a variety of commitments in your life, be it work, children or other caring duties. It is often difficult to focus on yourself and make a personal challenge. I feel that I have been so busy this past year taking care of everything and everyone around me that I have put my own interests and health on the back burner. If you are joining YU this term, welcome and perhaps your degree IS your big resolution. Some of you, like me, are almost at the end of this journey and need to start seeing how you can apply your studies to better your job prospects. With a rapid digitisation of our lives, perhaps learning a new online tool can be one of your resolutions. If you are a new student, there are several [events](#) from the main YU events calendar to choose from this term to support you as well as a range of ACMAPS courses for example [navigating York U's website](#) and [Time Management for Mature Students](#).

If you have ever attended a career fair on campus or searched for a job in the past, you will know how much first impressions and networking counts. Building relationships with potential employers makes you stand out and makes them remember you when it is time to apply for a job, so it is never too early to start networking. Several career and recruitment sessions are happening virtually over the coming months, and it is worth attending one (or few) because you just never know! On the main York U events page, do look out for workshops that will help prepare you for these new ways of networking for example: [Preparing for Career Fair Success: Job Search & Networking Strategies Webinar](#).



Most importantly, continue to look after your wellbeing. ACMAPS continues to offer regular



Picture shows wellbeing sign on grass

Mindful Meditation sessions and Virtual Café Hours as well as other resources that support mature, part-time and student-parents (with a [Student-Parents' Get Together](#) on the 29th January). Check the [ACMAPS events](#) page for the monthly schedule.

And for the record, here are my personal resolutions: 1 - drink more water, 2 - eat an apple a day, 3 - keep calm during home-schooling with the kids till schools open, 4 - join a karate class.

As for my professional areas of improvement/ tools I want to learn, I wrote these in my brand-new old-fashioned planner which I hope keeps me organised this year as a break from screen-gazing!

