

How to Crush Your Habits in the New Year With the Help of Science

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It's the shiniest time of year: that hopeful period when we imagine how remarkable — how fit and kind, how fiscally responsible — our future selves could be. And while you may think “new year, new you” is nothing more than a cringey, magazine-cover trope, [research supports its legitimacy](#).

Imagine it's the next New Year's Eve. What change are you going to be most grateful you made?

[Kelly McGonigal](#), a health psychologist and author of “The Willpower Instinct,” suggested asking yourself this question before making any resolutions. “It's crazy to me how often people work from the opposite,” she said. “They pick some behavior they've heard is good for them, and then they try to force it on themselves and hope it will lead to greater health or happiness.”

Sounds familiar, right? To avoid that trap, Dr. McGonigal recommended reflecting on what changes would make you happiest, then picking a “theme” for your year. That way, even if a particular habit doesn't stick, your overarching intention will.