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New Year's Resolutions  
Your Family Can Live With



By Jim Liebelt  
*Senior Writer, Editor and Researcher,  
HomeWord Center for Youth and Family*

I've heard it said that a New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other. Maybe this is why I've never been a big New Year resolution person. I've read a statistic that says 55% of Americans either never or only infrequently set New Year's resolutions. I guess this puts me in the majority. I'm probably this way for the same reason so many others have a certain disdain for resolutions. Once made, rarely have I managed to keep them. Again, it looks like I'm in the majority, as apparently only 8% of Americans are always successful in keeping their resolutions. So, I've thought to myself, if I know going in that I won't succeed, why bother?

I think part of my problem (and perhaps yours also) is that I've often set unrealistic resolutions, like "I'm going to lose 30 pounds in January." It's not that there is anything wrong with setting resolutions. But, in setting the bar higher than I know I can jump, I don't jump. Or, if I do jump, I fail.

Does this sound familiar? So, what if instead of not resolving to do anything, we just set the bar to a more reasonable height, where we at least make it possible to succeed? I'm hoping that this should provide *some* motivation to try. I'm not talking about making inconsequential resolutions, by the way, like "I resolve to eat in 2016." And, I'm not talking about long, drawn-out projects that cannot be accomplished in the short-term. No, I'm talking about simply trying to make reasonable, yet solid resolutions—any one of which can be accomplished in a day.

I think that with the right attitude going in, the following resolutions can help to get the New Year off to a positive start. The following resolutions are ones most everyone has a good shot of accomplishing – something that your family can live with whether you try them alone or as a family.

I've provided 30 resolutions, and by the sheer number, they might seem overwhelming. But that is not my intention. Start by picking *one*. If you decide to try more remember that there is **no pressure** in pursuing the plan. Also, there is no mystical order that these resolutions should be attempted, and there is nothing wrong with repeating one or more. Find the resolution you like best, and start with it. Oh yes, there's one more thing: There is a hidden agenda in these resolutions. I'm hoping that as you try them, that you will end up incorporating some of them into your life as part of who you are and what you do day-in and day-out.

### **30 Resolutions for the New Year**

**Day 1: *Just for today, I resolve to pray.*** This doesn't have to be difficult. Sometime during the day, just say a short prayer. Thank God for something, or praise God for something, or tell God you love Him, or confess something to Him, or ask Him for something, or ask Him for something for someone other than yourself. Just try one of these things. Or, if you feel like it – do all of the above.

**Day 2: *Just for today, I resolve to say, "I love you" to someone.*** It's really not hard, and if you try, you really *can* find the moment it takes to say it, email it, text it or show it. There are few sayings more powerful in the life of another than these three little words.

**Day 3: *Just for today, I resolve to appreciate the world around me.*** Take a moment or two to smell the roses, or look at the blue sky (or clouds, or rain, or snow, ocean, mountains, trees... you get the picture) and let the beauty in the world and of life roll over you.

**Day 4: *Just for today, I resolve to save money.*** No, you don't have to put away money for your retirement or actually put money into a bank account. Simply pass on spending money on *something* you normally would pay for today. Skip the afternoon Starbucks run, or pack a lunch or snack from home instead of purchasing them. If you'd like, set aside the money you save today for something—or someone—else.

**Day 5: *Just for today, I resolve to forgive someone.*** Okay, this doesn't mean that *today* you have to forgive the person for the worst wrongdoing that's ever been committed against you (but it *would* be a good day for this.) But, we routinely suffer minor offenses against us, so think of *one* and in your heart and soul, forgive the person who committed the offense. It's good for you to exercise the same forgiveness that God has demonstrated toward you. If it makes sense, tell the offending person that you forgive them.

**Day 6: *Just for today, I resolve not to compare myself to anyone else.*** The temptation always exists, doesn't it? Yet, playing the comparison game is never good for us. We can always find someone who appears to have more, better, easier... well, you get the picture. It's important to remember that we'll always lose when we compare what we know to be true about ourselves with what we *don't know* for sure about others.

**Day 7: *Just for today, I resolve to create some warmth in my home.*** It's been said that home is where we go when we're tired of being nice. Sadly, this is too often true. Everyone at home wins when we do our part to create a warm and loving atmosphere at home. Today, try some kind words, engage, pay attention (be a good listener), show appropriate physical contact (a kiss, a hug, a touch), encourage, and lighten up.

**Day 8: *Just for today, I resolve to exercise.*** Today, do yourself and your family some good by getting some exercise. This can be as simple as going outside for a brisk walk. You don't have to go overboard here. In fact, if you haven't been getting regular exercise, *don't go overboard!* If at all possible, exercise by doing something you enjoy. If you find all exercise tedious, try listening to music, an audiobook, a radio broadcast or a podcast while exercising.

**Day 9: *Just for today, I resolve to read from the Bible.*** No length requirements and no reading plan here. Today, just take some moments to read *something* from God's word. Read a verse, passage, chapter, or book, something familiar and cherished, or investigate a portion of Scripture you have never read. Whatever you do here, it will be good for your life and your soul (See Psalm 119:105). Up the ante: memorize a verse or short passage of Scripture (see Psalm 119:11).

**Day 10: *Just for today, I resolve to eat less.*** This may not apply to you, but most Americans eat more food than they need. When was the last time you consciously thought about having a smaller portion for a meal, or passing on seconds, dessert, or that late night snack? It is possible to eat less than you normally do. Try it, just for today. If you get hungry along the way, use it as a spiritual reminder that Jesus is the “Bread of Life”—the source of satisfaction for our hungry souls. Up the ante: If you are in good health, try fasting for one meal, 12-hours, or an entire day. (Don't skip the fluids!)

**Day 11: *Just for today, I resolve to prepare.*** We all have *something* on the horizon that will benefit from some advance preparation. Not many of us are good at this, but the time invested in preparation usually pays off when the time to act on that *something* arrives. Today, look ahead to that future event, deadline, or project and take some time to prepare.

**Day 12: *Just for today, I resolve not to demand the last word.*** Today's resolution is a simple exercise in the discipline of deference. Many of us seek to have the last word...on everything! Since I'm not a psychologist, I can't explain all of the possible reasons why so many of us feel and act this way. But today, just for today, when some non-life-or-death issue arises and you feel that pressure to provide the last word on the subject, decide not to do it. You might in fact, be right on the issue at hand. Still, just defer. Just this once. It's likely that you'll find the world doesn't unravel immediately after all, and it might relieve some of the pressure you feel to keep it from spinning apart.

**Day 13: *Just for today, I resolve to make the most of today.*** This will mean different things to different people. Only you have an accurate idea of what things you take for granted, how you skim at work, or in your relationships, or even with yourself. Find something today, anything, to just squeeze a little more out of this day. Take a pass on watching television tonight and invest in a project, hobby, a good book, or a conversation. Stay a bit longer at the office water cooler to listen to your coworker's story about her sick father. Linger a bit longer when you kiss your spouse this evening. You may find that some very simple things can add a lot of meaning to your day.

**Day 14: *Just for today, I resolve to learn something new.*** It's the information age! There's no shortage of opportunity to learn something new, and hopefully something that can enrich your life or at least your knowledge about the world around you. So today, take some time to skim a newspaper or magazine, watch an informative television program or online video, or just browse an interesting website.

**Day 15: *Just for today, I resolve to eat a food I enjoy.*** Life is too short to completely abstain from eating all foods you enjoy. Even if you are in the midst of an attempt to lose some weight after the holiday season, the common advice is to treat yourself to something you find yummy (in moderation, of course) once in awhile. It's amazing how something as little as eating a food you enjoy can really perk up your day! Bon Appetite!

**Day 16: *Just for today, I resolve to say, "Please"*.** The word "please" is an often overlooked common courtesy these days, and especially within the family. We can easily slip into taking our family members for granted, and so (intentionally or unintentionally) assume that others are at our beck and call. So just for today, add the polite request to your vocabulary, whether at home, school, or work. It doesn't cost anything, and your action just might motivate others to do the same.

**Day 17: *Just for today, I resolve to laugh*.** We can all benefit from laughing more than we do. Life is so darned serious, yes? Many of us are too busy, live too complicated lives, or are in the midst of painful life situations, which makes laughter a rare occurrence. Just for today, add laughter to your to-do list. Take a few moments to remember a good joke, watch a comedy, or look up a short funny video online. Remember, it is said that laughter is the best medicine.

**Day 18: *Just for today, I resolve to do something unusually nice for a family member*.** You probably do a lot of nice things for your family already. If you are a parent, much of your life might be centered on doing nice things for your children and spouse. But just for today, identify one uncharacteristic way to do *something* nice for a family member. Take out the garbage, bring in the newspaper, give up the remote control, do someone else's normal chore. Do it joyfully as a way of demonstrating your love for that person.

**Day 19: *Just for today, I resolve to forgive myself*.** We are our own worst critics. No one else on earth knows as well as you do just how far you fall short of God's ideals and your own ideals, as well. Just for today, give yourself a break. Think of one of your shortcomings, confess it to God (He forgives!) and grant yourself the same forgiveness that God demonstrates to you. Maybe you do need to make some life changes to overcome this shortcoming or weakness in the future. Think through a plan of action. But, give up wallowing in the mud over the past, look to the future instead, and live in freedom as a forgiven child of God.

**Day 20: *Just for today, I resolve to sleep in*.** We live in a culture of sleep deprived people. Statistically, it's likely you are one of the many who don't get enough sleep. If you are at all like me, getting some extra sleep may only amount to 10 minutes, but take whatever time your family and your own body allows you. For some, it might mean taking a rare nap in the afternoon, or after dinner. Do whatever works for you. Your body will thank you for it!

**Day 21: *Just for today, I resolve to spend some time with my family*.** My colleague, Dr. Jim Burns, speaks often about how the breathless pace we live life is breaking families apart. So today, give your family the gift of your presence. This doesn't have to be complicated. Just make some space in this day to be with your family in both body and attention. Play a game together, take a walk, have a conversation, go somewhere, make a memory. Both you and your family will benefit from it.

**Day 22: *Just for today, I resolve to be kind.*** Simply put, being kind involves living out Jesus' words, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12) Just for today, treat others the way you would want to be treated in similar circumstances, at home, at work, at school, and with everyone you come in contact with. This might not be easy, as we can often react negatively towards those who are not acting in kindness to us. But remember, Jesus doesn't call us to treat others *as* they treat us. And, keep in mind that you don't often know everything that is going on in someone else's life and why they act the way they do. So, to the best of your ability, today give others the benefit of the doubt, and respond kindly.

**Day 23: *Just for today, I resolve to give someone a choice.*** Life can begin to weigh us down when we feel we have no choices. Today, lighten someone else's load by finding a way to offer them a choice. Perhaps it's offering your child a choice between several chores around the house. Or, possibly offering a coworker, peer, or subordinate a choice between tasks. Maybe, it's simply asking your spouse what they'd like to watch on television this evening.

**Day 24: *Just for today, I resolve to make someone laugh.*** This is a corollary to Day 17. Sure, this day is likely to be filled with serious and important issues to face. Still, we all need to experience the gift of laughter, and the accompanying lightening of heart, from time to time. Your mission today is to make someone else laugh. Not known for your sense of humor? Find a (wholesome) joke that you like and share it with someone. The fact that you aren't known as a funny person will likely make the other person laugh even more.

**Day 25: *Just for today, I resolve to do something nice for someone I know outside of my own family.*** Identify one person you'll be in contact with today, and think of a way to do something nice for them. This shouldn't be difficult, even though it may be unexpected. It can be as easy as picking up a cup of coffee for a friend or a coworker. Be creative and help to make someone else's day.

**Day 26: *Just for today, I resolve to say "thank you."*** This is another of the often-overlooked common courtesies that used to be a part of polite society. It's not likely that most of us are ungrateful for what others do on our behalf. We just don't seem to express gratitude, as freely as once may have been the norm. Today, resolve to communicate your thanks to everyone who does something for you—from the barista who serves your morning mocha to your spouse who ran that errand for you on his or her lunch break. Trust me, the gesture will be appreciated. "Thank you" is a surprisingly powerful phrase.

**Day 27: *Just for today, I resolve to pay someone a complement.*** Similar to saying thank you, a complement is a powerful way to encourage someone, but it goes beyond something they've done for you personally and highlights some action or characteristic in them that you admire. This may take some work on your part, but perhaps not. Do you admire the way a coworker handles pressure? Let him or her know. Do you admire the way your daughter serves others without being asked? Let her know. Do you admire the way your spouse makes parenting your kids look so easy? Let her or him know.

**Day 28: *Just for today, I resolve to do something relaxing.*** Chances are you live a full and busy life. When was the last time you did something relaxing that you enjoy? Perhaps it has been a long time. Regardless, today take at least a few moments to relieve the stress and pressure that seem so constant in your life. Grab a cup of coffee with a friend; take a walk on the beach, read a chapter of a book. Do something that serves to relax you, if only for a brief period.

**Day 29: *Just for today, I resolve to do something nice for a complete stranger.*** You don't have to go overboard here. A kind act on behalf of a stranger reminds us that we are part of the community of humanity. We will never know the stories, pleasures or pains of those people we walk by day in and day out. But, most likely, their lives, at least at their core, are very similar to yours. They yearn, they hurt, and they love, just like you. So just for today, why not reach out to someone and be reminded that as one person among many, you are part of something bigger than yourself and your family. Open a door for someone. Pay a toll for the person in the car behind you. Help pick up papers that someone drops on the street. Remember, Jesus' words: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

**Day 30: *Just for today, I resolve to do something out of the ordinary.*** It was Henry David Thoreau who wrote, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." I don't admire Thoreau as a theologian, but I think he largely got it right in this quote. I believe a large number of people, perhaps even you, get bogged down in the routines of life. I have nothing against routines, except when they become our master. Much can be said about the righteousness of living a careful, responsible life before God. But, this is not at issue for me in this resolution. My fear is that the life Jesus lived and died to give us ("I came that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:10) can get lost in the devotion to safety and routine. I'm not advocating going out today to partake in some "extreme" thrill sport. I'm simply encouraging you to do something outside of your normal routine, to experience life outside the lines you've drawn, to provide yourself with the opportunity to "sing your song." How? Only you can decide for sure, but maybe it's as simple as taking the long way home from school or work to gain a new perspective on the world right around you that otherwise goes unnoticed. Perhaps it involves preparing a dinner from another culture for your family. And maybe, just maybe, it is taking that bungee jump that you've always wanted to try, but has always seemed so "unlike you."