



Prudential Investment Managers

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## Your New Year's Resolution Check-In

It may seem like a long time ago now, but back in early January you would have set some goals for the new year. Now, a couple of busy months later, it's time for a check-in. Are you still sticking to those New Year's resolutions? And if not, how can you get yourself – and your goals – back on track?

As we wrote at the beginning of the year, goals are vital to leading a fruitful and joyful life. When it comes to setting goals in your financial planning, success is based on the same concepts that underpin time-based investing, namely accuracy, specificity, harmony and truth. ([Read the article here.](#)) If you have slipped up in sticking to your goals this year, the problem might lie in a failure to adequately execute one of those concepts.

Regular check-ins are vital to helping you stay on course to achieving your goals. After all, when performance is measured, performance can be assessed and improved. Schedule regular self-assessments, where you hold yourself accountable for refining your strategy or – if necessary – redefining your goal. Remember that autonomous goals, which are driven by our own motivations, are more likely to be achieved than goals which are set for us by an outside source.

During these quick check-ins, follow these five steps to keep things ticking along.

### **1. Reassess:**

If you have already started to drift away from your goal, you may need to revise your thinking, and reassess whether it is actually achievable. It's good to aim high, but did you aim too high?

Remember to make your resolutions realistic, without being cynical about what you can accomplish. You may well find that your goal is still possible, but that a change in strategy is needed.

### **2. Refocus:**

Too often, personal New Year's resolutions focus on activities, rather than goals. Examples of this might be telling yourself that you will go to the gym five times a week, or resolving to go on a diet. If that's the case, shift your focus to the end goal, rather than getting stuck on the activities that will ultimately get you there. Those activities can change, as long as your goal stays steady. For example, maybe three intense gym sessions are better than five... and maybe focusing on your overall health is a better way to lose those stubborn kilos.

### **3. Rewrite:**

Your goal statement may need to be reworded. Some people are driven by growth or 'approach' goals, which look forward to achieving something (for example, saving and investing towards a holiday or a new car). Others prefer avoidance goals, which are based on avoiding an undesired outcome (for example, 'I avoid not having enough money to retire well'). Understand which of those approaches motivates you best, and reframe your goal statement to reflect that.

### **4. Refresh:**

If your circumstances have changed and your goal no longer makes sense, then update it – or forget it completely and replace it with something else that does make sense. Don't waste time on goals that you either can't achieve, or no longer really want to achieve. Keep your goals fresh and meaningful. For financial goals, this is a good time to revisit our [Goal Calculator](#).

### **5. Relax:**

Don't beat yourself up if you've slipped up. Mistakes and missteps will inevitably happen along the way. The key is to keep your eye on your main goal, and to be flexible with your plan. Don't give up completely just because you've hit a difficult patch, or had a slow start. If you need to, ask for help. Seek support from friends and loved ones when it comes to personal goals, and schedule a meeting with your qualified Financial Adviser to help you stay on track with your financial goals. Speak to our Client Services Team at [query@prudential.co.za](mailto:query@prudential.co.za) for more information on getting the support you need.

Ultimately, following through on your New Year's resolutions is less about willpower, and more about developing the right goals, executing a carefully crafted strategy, and having the patience to see things through to the end – a lot like successful investing.