

# A New Year's resolution for the editors of the *European Heart Journal*: a resolution on not making big resolutions

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Every year, as the first of January rolls around, a familiar scene unfolds. We all make New Year's resolutions. And, just as predictably, we all fail. Why? Because that's what we do. It's part of the human condition. We want to be better, healthier and more focused. But let's be honest, when the excitement of the New Year fades, so does our commitment to those lofty goals. So, this year, we have a confession: we, the editors of the *European Heart Journal: Acute Cardiovascular Care*, are making a resolution to not make a resolution. Before you roll your eyes, let us explain. We've been there. We've set grand goals to work out more, eat better, or stop doomscrolling through our phones. We've written long, passionate mission statements about how this year will be the one where everything changes. And then... it doesn't happen. So, this year, we're going to do things differently. We are going to embrace chaos, accept imperfection, and instead of fighting against ourselves, we're going to make a pact to be kinder to ourselves.

Let's start by addressing the elephant in the room: New Year's resolutions are often a trap. The moment the clock strikes midnight, we are expected to become a new person, one who suddenly has all the discipline, energy, and willpower to change every aspect of our lives. But the truth is, it's incredibly hard to change indentured habits overnight. No one becomes a marathon runner or a super healthy eater simply because the calendar has flipped over. In fact, setting overly ambitious goals is almost setting yourself up for failure. How many of us have vowed to 'exercise more' or 'eat healthier' only to find ourselves face deep in chocolate cake by mid-January? The problem with these sweeping resolutions is that they're vague. And vagueness gives us the perfect excuse to back out. Who defines 'more' exercise? Who determines what 'healthier' eating means? Without a clear, actionable plan, your resolution is essentially a wish wrapped in a fragile promise. So, instead of setting a huge, unattainable goal, let's focus on something we can control: micro-habits.

[Small Changes Lead to Big Results] The key to success in any self-improvement endeavour isn't to shoot for the stars but to make small, sustainable changes that add up overtime. Think of it like breaking down a big project into manageable tasks. As anyone who's ever edited a

scientific paper knows, it's the small steps—reviewing one section at a time, correcting one citation at a time—that eventually lead to the finished product. It's the same with self-improvement. Instead of saying, 'I will work out every day this year' (which is practically impossible), start with something smaller, like 'I'll walk for 10 min after lunch.' That's achievable. It feels doable. And it's something you can follow through on. And guess what? After a few weeks of walking 10 min every day, you'll find that you naturally start to want to do more. You'll feel better, have more energy, and be more inclined to tackle the next step. It's the classic snowball effect. The same goes for eating healthier. Instead of committing to a drastic diet overhaul, start by adding a serving of vegetables to every lunch. That's it. You're not depriving yourself of anything, you're just adding something good. And before you know it, one small change will lead to bigger, more impactful adjustments in your eating habits.

[Micro-habits: The Secret Sauce to Success] Now, let's get real about this whole 'micro-habits' thing. It's not just about setting tiny goals; it's about making them so small that they're practically impossible to fail. Imagine you've decided to read more books this year. Instead of setting a daunting goal like 'Read 30 books,' try 'Read one page a day.' Just one. Sounds ridiculous, right? But that's the point. It's so small, so easy, that you can't possibly come up with an excuse to avoid it. And once you're in the habit of reading one page, you'll find yourself reading more without even trying. This is the magic of micro-habits. They're so simple and so easy that they bypass the resistance we normally feel toward big changes. The goal is not to tackle a mountain but to take one step at a time. Each step brings you closer to your goal, but more importantly, it builds momentum. And that momentum is what ultimately leads to lasting change.

[Take care of yourself, before caring for others] But here's the secret we've all been missing: To truly change anything in our lives, we first must take care of ourselves. You can't pour from an empty cup, after all. If we want to be effective physicians—author's—editors, if we want to make an impact on the world of cardiovascular care, we first need to look after our own health—mental, physical, and emotional. That means we need to stop expecting ourselves to be perfect, and instead, prioritize self-compassion. If we miss a day of exercise, so what? If

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we indulge in that extra piece of cake, who cares? The key is to get back on track without guilt. Perfection isn't the goal. Progress is. And let's face it: Life is already unpredictable. We can't control everything, and sometimes, things won't go according to plan. But that's okay. The important thing is to not let one slip-up derail your entire year. Small changes, combined with self-compassion, lead to sustainable growth. It's about progress, not perfection.

[The Power of Patience] If there's one thing we've learned in our years as health professionals, it's that lasting change takes time. We've seen it time and time again: The best results come from patience, consistency, and the willingness to adapt. We've seen heart patients who've made incremental changes in their lifestyles—whether it's eating a bit better, exercising more, or managing stress—and have reaped the benefits over time. Change isn't always immediate, but it is always possible. This year, instead of holding ourselves to impossible standards, we're going to embrace small victories. Instead of trying to change everything, we'll focus on improving a little bit every day. And most importantly, we'll make sure we have fun along the way. Because the truth is, when you enjoy the process, you're far more likely to stick with it.

So, here's our New Year's resolution for 2025, editors of the *European Heart Journal: Acute Cardiovascular Care*: to let go of unrealistic

goals. Instead, we pledge to embrace imperfection, savor the journey, and take progress one small step at a time. We commit to prioritizing our own well-being—because caring for others starts with caring for ourselves. By this time next year, we might just find ourselves healthier, happier, and closer to becoming the best versions of ourselves. Maybe we'll even publish our highest-quality papers yet and boost our altmetrics by 40%. But no pressure—it's all about taking it one step at a time. With this, we look forward to 2025 with great ambition and warmly wish you and your loved ones a prosperous and, most importantly, healthy New Year.

Pascal Vranckx, David Morrow, Sean van Diepen, Frederik Verbrugge editors.

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