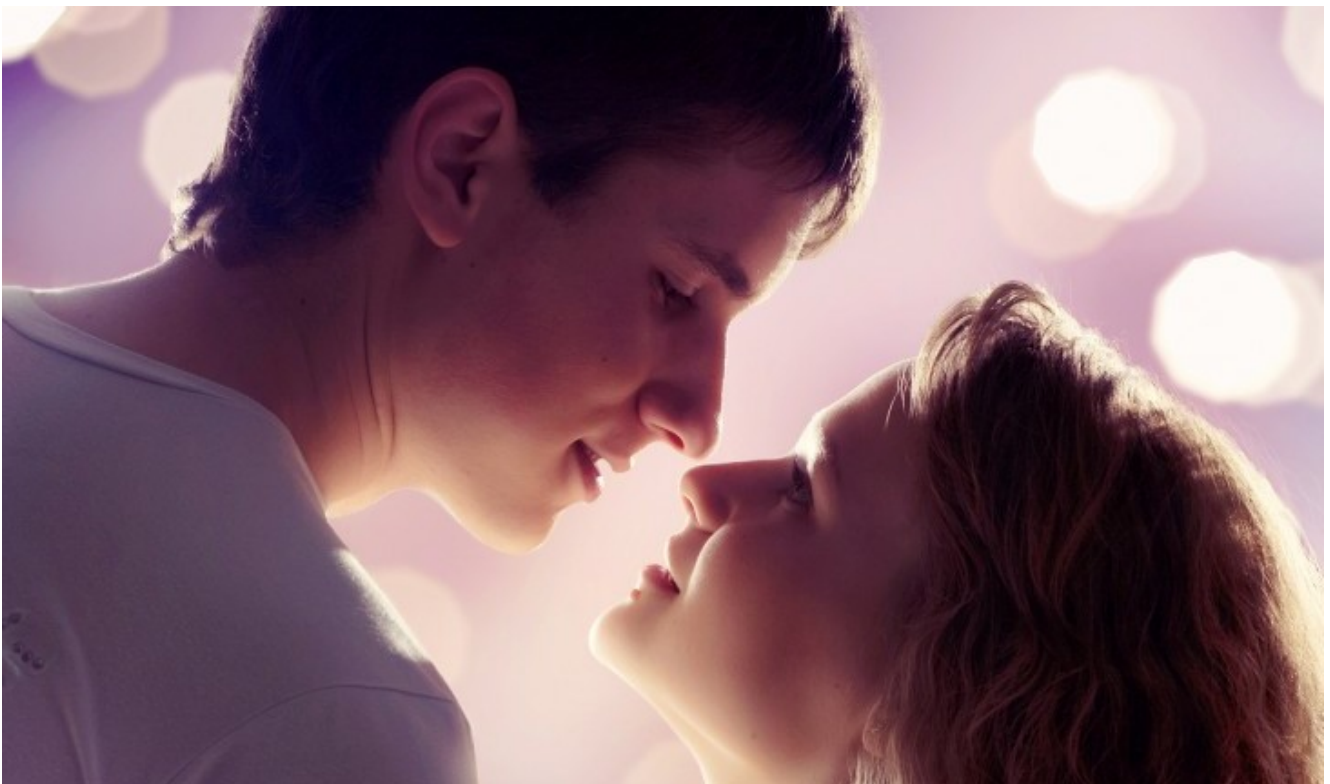


Relationship Advice: How Your Relationships And Love Impact Your New Year's Resolutions



By Toni Coleman, LCSW

Now that we're closing in on February, it's a good time to take inventory of how your New Year's resolutions are progressing, or not. Have you made adjustments to your environment, created a specific plan, tweaked your schedule or set aside time for following through on the short-term objectives that will get you there? If you have done even one of these, it's a real start. However, if you draw a blank when reading this, you may have already lost your resolve or even forgotten about your goals altogether. If this is the case, and you want to get back on track—it is important to examine

where you got off course and what factors may have influenced it.

As a relationship expert, I notice that one variable people may overlook, but that carries a lot of weight, is how much support you get from your relationship and love. In assessing this, it's important to pay attention to what they do more than what they say. There are many subtle ways that a partner can sabotage your efforts, especially if he or she fears it will impact your shared lifestyle, threatens him in some way, or upset the status quo in general. If you believe this is occurring, consider talking to your partner about what you see happening and ask for help. My [relationship advice](#) is to look at the following eight behaviors to assist you in pinpointing and articulating your concerns and then moving toward a productive discussion on how you can best support one another.

Relationship Advice: How Partner's Can Sabotage New Year's Resolutions

Your partner resists changes that support your goals. For example, you might need to eat an earlier dinner as part of your weight loss goal or you might find that early morning is the best time to work out, but it will mean your partner will then need to cover things at home. Perhaps you have found a class one evening that is just what you need to make an eventual career change, but it's during a time that would then require your partner to adjust their schedule. All of these are potential scenarios that people face when attempting to make changes and a supportive partner will try to make accommodations whenever possible. Sometimes it just isn't possible and alternative solutions will need to be considered.

Your partner insists on activities and interests that set you up for failure. Maybe you have a long-standing tradition of eating take-out on Saturday nights in front of the TV that you

follow-up with a decadent dessert. However, you need to make dietary changes that will support your goal for better nutrition and health. Maybe most of what you have always enjoyed together has been sedentary in nature, such as going to the movies, out to dinner, drinking with friends at a local pub, or hanging out in your bathrobes and reading or watching TV. While there is nothing wrong with doing any of these some of the time, if you have set a goal to be more active during leisure hours, these will need to be cut back in order to create time for something new. My relationship advice is to make sure your partner isn't insisting that everything stay the same. If they do this and pout, it will undermine your efforts and force you to make a choice between your relationship and your goal.

Your partner makes negative comments about your changes. Statements like, "You're no fun anymore," or "It doesn't look like it's making any difference," can lead to you feeling bad about yourself or losing resolve due to a concern that the potential downsides to making the change outweigh the benefits. What you need instead is a cheerleader who offers encouragement, finds positive things to focus on—and lets you know they support you, no matter what.

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Your partner behaves punitively when he doesn't get his way. Change is hard for everyone. Your partner might feel bad about losing his drinking or eating buddy. She might feel some resentment about making changes in her schedule or to giving something up to accommodate your new needs. He might be feeling nostalgia for some things you used to do together and with others that you now need to refrain from. These feelings are natural and understandable, but your partner should bring them up with you in a non-defensive way instead of acting out. You might be able to come up with compromises that meet both of your needs while allowing your partner to hang on to some

of the things that are most important to them.

Your partner throws temptations in your path. An all too common scenario is the one where one spouse decides to give up sweets or alcohol, and her partner begins bringing home a lot of what the other is trying to abstain from, and encouraging them to try just a little bite or sip. There are many reasons for why this behavior is so common, but none of them are good ones. If this is happening to you, my love advice is to address it immediately by making a gentle request for “free temptation zones” in your home.

Your partner lacks awareness of how your changes are threatening her. It can be difficult for your partner to see you working towards a goal that he or she feels they should also be working toward. If you have always been overweight together, having a spouse who suddenly loses weight and feels good about her new appearance could be threatening, especially when other people of the opposite sex take notice. If you give up drinking, he may feel judged when he reaches for a beer, glass of wine or a cocktail; even if you don't indicate that you have an issue with it. Should he begin to act threatened by a change you are making that he or she believes they also should be working on, consider bringing up your observations gently with them. Remind him that this is a choice that you have made for yourself and that he is free to do the same or not, depending on his needs and wants.

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Your partner creates a competition between you. This one dovetails on the one above—you are not in competition, you are (or should be) on the same side. Being on the same team means you support one another's success, cheering each other along on the road to accomplishment. If your partner starts bean counting, it will undermine the relationship as this causes division and an attitude of me first, me only. If two people

are focused on their needs and wants, the couple cannot function as a cohesive unit, which is the foundation of a healthy and mutually satisfying relationship.

Your partner sees changes as meeting your needs vs. meeting his needs. A supportive and happy relationship is not an “either, or” one. When problem-solving becomes a contest where one spouse is designated the winner and the other the loser, both people in the relationship lose. There is a very wide continuum between those two ends, and somewhere along the way are points at which a compromise can be found.

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Negotiation and compromise are essential to the health of every relationship, as is getting the kind of support that will help you stick to and achieve your resolutions. When you win, your partner also wins—and vice versa.

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