

HEALTH & FITNESS

ADVERTISING FEATURE

JANUARY is traditionally the time when we vow to improve our health and wellbeing, whether that's heading to the gym more, quitting our daily latte habit or cutting back on fatty foods. Instead, argues life and career coach Alice Stapleton (alcestapleton.com), we should be using that 'back to school' feeling we get at this time of year as motivation to make positive changes — apparently, we're much more likely to succeed than in the dead of winter.

Still not convinced? Stapleton, inset below, reveals why now is the best time to set yourself some goals, and offers tips on how to stick to them...

First of all, she says **there's too much pressure in January.**

"They say you should never start a diet on a Monday. The same goes for resolutions — January carries the pressure and expectation of a Monday.

"Far better to start in September, when you're refreshed and relaxed from the summer.

"If your goal is to start eating more healthily, start small by simply adding one piece of fruit or veg to your diet, instead of restricting or taking away foods.

"In time, start cutting down on those unhealthy



Life and career coach Alice Stapleton tells *Katie Wright* why we should all be making September resolutions



foods, but do it slowly — going 'cold turkey' hardly ever works."

And **September is better for outdoor activities, too.**

"January is often dark and cold — not exactly an ideal time to be setting new fitness goals that may involve being outside more.

"The weather in September is often far more conducive if you

want to be exercising outside. The key here is planning and accountability.

"Pack your running kit/gym bag before you go to bed and leave it by the front door, so there's less time to make excuses in the morning.

"Get someone else involved, too — book a class together, or plan a time to meet, so you're both committed to turning up."

This time of year lets you **embrace the 'back to school' feeling.**

"Take advantage of the inspiring stationery available this time of year, and the array of time-management apps, to help you plan and track your progress against your goals for the remaining months of the year.

"Make sure you regularly document why you want to achieve these goals too — what will the short- and long-term impact be?

"This ensures more buy-in and reminds you regularly of the importance behind your goals."

Plus, you can get into good habits now, ready for winter.

"December and January are some of the toughest months of the year. We're often tired and burnt out from all the celebrations — this can make it a counter-intuitive time to start implementing new goals.

"Better to get into a routine through September, so your new habit is fully embedded come winter.

"Remember, it takes at least one to two months to form a new habit, so don't give up too early!

"Stick at least 21 Post-It notes on your wall and take one off each time you complete a step towards your over-arching goal."

You can rally more support in September from your friends as well.

"Fewer people set their goals in September, meaning others are more likely to get behind you and support your progress," Stapleton argues.

"Tell a friend or colleague you've booked yourself into a class, or you're going to have a salad for lunch the next day, and ask them to hold you accountable to that, by asking how the class was or going with you to the salad bar.

"Remember to reward and encourage yourself along the way, too — decide on a reward you'll treat yourself to when you've achieved your goal.

"Anything that will motivate you to stay on-track."



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