

# STAYING RESOLUTE



## Hannah Collisson speaks to Sussex therapist Robert Sanders on how to best achieve your New Year's goals.

January often seems like a particularly long month, when the exuberance of New Year's may be rapidly wearing off and yet spring is far from springing.

It is easy to make resolutions at the start of the year – giving up smoking or drinking, taking more exercise – but it is also far too easy to become demoralised after the initial enthusiasm, and fail to make lasting change.

Is there any value at all in New Year's resolutions? Sussex-based therapist and coach Robert Sanders certainly thinks so, and says that resolutions should be part of a bigger picture.

“I think once people have started to have real success in achieving something like a New Year Resolution, they may start to set themselves goals for what they want to achieve in life.”

He has even written a book on the subject, *Making Your New Year Resolution Work For You*, which was released in paperback at the end of last year, which he says has a workbook feel about it, encouraging people to write down their values and goals in more detail, and contains example approaches to help with motivation.

One of Robert's key messages is the need to get organised, and whether the resolution is big or small, get to the heart of why they are doing it.

“People need to ask themselves what they are actually trying to achieve rather than what they are trying to stop doing,” says Robert. “I do strongly believe that people need to get back to what their ultimate goal in life is.”

A resolution may not need to be for a whole year either, some goals take a lot less time to achieve, and others a great



Robert Sanders

deal more, he says. Here Robert shares a few essential tips for making and also keeping those tricky New Year's resolutions:

**1** Think about what you want to achieve and why. "One of the things I say about resolutions is that they are little steps towards bigger goals. And you should only have one resolution at a time," says Richard. "Do it well, and then move on to the next one. Don't be tempted to stick a whole load of rules and regulations onto yourself."

If you have a big goal such as wanting to get healthy, break it down into manageable chunks.

**2** Be forgiving of yourself. When people slip up, it's important to accept that as a learning experience rather than consider it as a failure.

There is a quote attributed to Robert Allen – "There is no failure, only feedback" – which Richard says can be useful to bear in mind.

"Just analyse what you have done wrong and try to correct it."

**3** Make it as easy for yourself as possible. Write down exactly what you are going to do, and how you are going to do it, setting reminders where applicable.

"When you know there's a situation where you are possibly going to be weak, have a practice in your mind of what you are going to do when you get there."

Taking the aim of cutting down the amount of sugar in your diet, Robert suggests trying to make it as difficult as possible to eat sugar, for example by putting the sugar in a container that is padlocked.

**4** Don't do it alone. Get as much support and help from positive people in your life as possible.

Taking the example of giving up smoking, which is a common resolution, but a hugely challenging one, Robert says this is especially relevant.

"It is about getting people onside. If

somebody is going to offer you a cigarette when they know you are giving up, they are not really being a good friend."

**5** Keep it up for 30 consecutive days to make or break a habit. It is often said this is how long it takes to form a habit, and whether or not this is entirely accurate, consistent repetition is key. Set a pattern for yourself, so that following the resolution becomes more natural, says Richard.

"You have neural pathways in your brain, and as you repeat anything, the pathways become stronger; it's a bit like treading a pathway in a forest."

Robert also suggests attaching a new habit to an old one to help create routine.

"I exercise while making a cup of tea," he says.

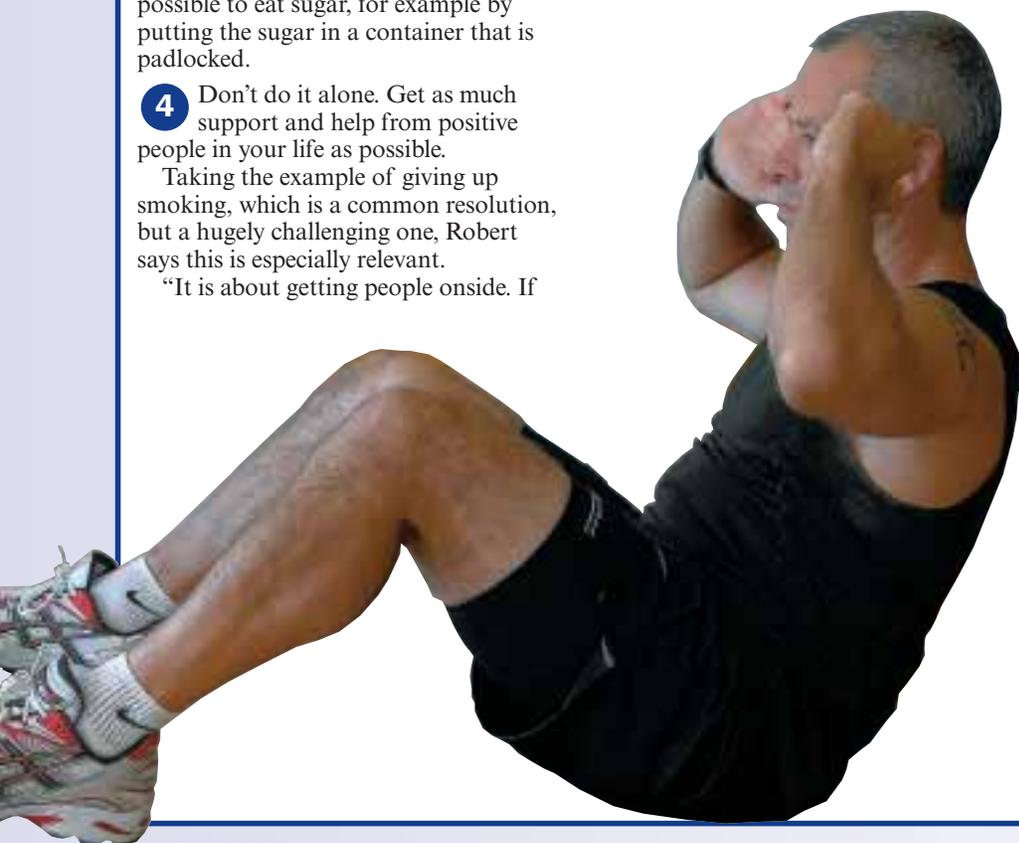
**6** Consider talking to a therapist.

There are many different types of therapists using a wide variety of methods, and this could be worth thinking about, says Robert, who himself works with clients using hypnotherapy and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

Other types of therapies include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, emotional freedom technique, and acupuncture.

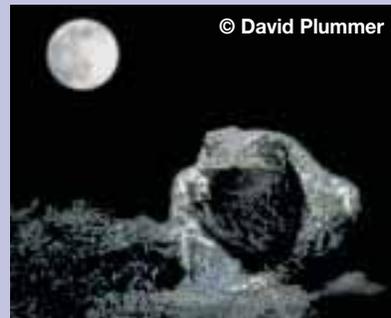
Life coaching is another option, and many practitioners combine therapy with coaching.

■ **Making Your New Year Resolution Work For You is available now from Amazon. Contact Robert Sanders by email at [rsanders@robertsanders.me.uk](mailto:rsanders@robertsanders.me.uk) or visit [www.robertsanders.me.uk](http://www.robertsanders.me.uk).**



SEVEN DAYS

## nature spot



### Sue Curnock of Sussex Wildlife Trust talks toads

Toads have a one-track mind when migrating back to their breeding ponds in search of a mate, and nothing gets in the way of their amorous feelings – including busy roads and railways. Although this mass migration is a wonderful sight, sadly every year scores of these determined Don Juans of the toad world are killed by cars as they cross roads following long established routes to breeding areas. This, and the loss of habitat, is having a significant impact on the number of toads in the UK. At Sussex Wildlife Trust we are always interested to hear of sightings of toads so we can build up a picture of the locations of their crossings and breeding grounds.

**Toads spend the majority of their lives on land, under rocks, in compost heaps and in vegetable patches. But like all amphibians they must return to water to breed. Migration happens anytime between January and April, toads usually emerging at dusk after a spell of damp warmish weather. They are mainly nocturnal and move along the same route every year; some can travel over two kilometres to reach their preferred pond.**

In some locations annual toad patrols have been introduced, with 'Toad Crossing' signs erected to help warn traffic. Groups of dedicated local volunteers spend their evenings collecting migrating toads in buckets and carrying them to safety across the road.

**To find out more information about toad crossings in Sussex, please contact Jess Price, our WildCall Officer, on the number below.**

If you have a wildlife query, ring Sussex Wildlife Trust's free hotline, WildCall, on 01273 494777 or visit the advice pages on the website [www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk)