

*Free item of equal or lesser price.

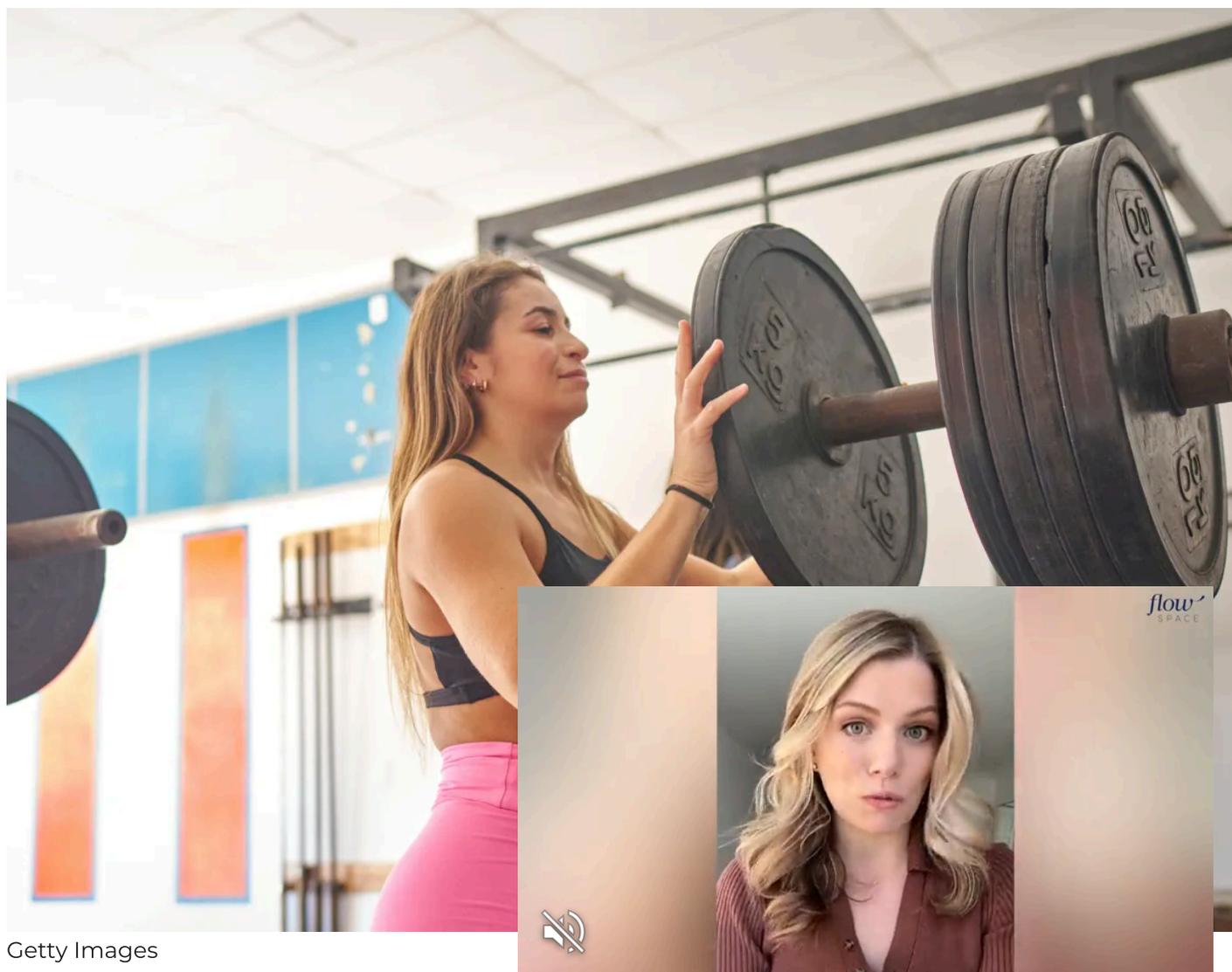
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How to Make 2026 the Year You Build Habits That Actually Stick

Because burnout isn't a strategy.

BY HELEN CAREFOOT 

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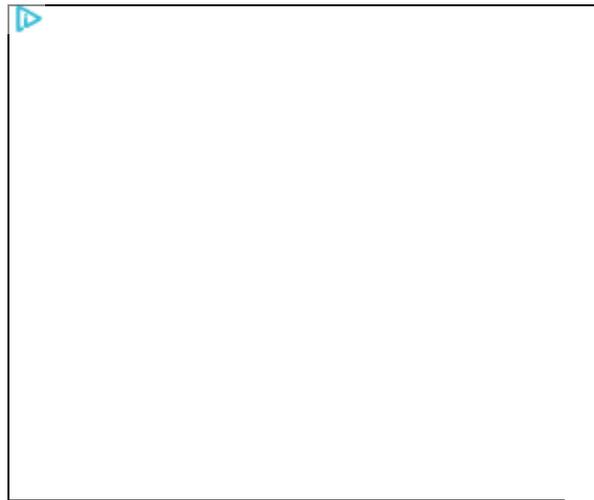


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Every January, you likely make a list of habits you want to adopt (and keep) in the new year. But without approaching these the right way, resolutions can easily fall by the wayside.

The name of the game is taking small, consistent steps so these resolutions become habits. Flow Space spoke with experts to get their top tips about how to make six common resolutions into habits that stick.



Lift More

Given the importance of strength training, it's no surprise that going to the gym and either starting or leveling up a lifting routine is a common resolution. But resolutions without actionable plans are bound to fail.

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lifting routine is about consistency and realizing it doesn't have to mean doing more or pushing harder all the time."

Progressive overload is key to building muscle, so slowly amping up weight and reps is great. To do this, Greca recommends slowly adding more weight a couple pounds at a time and "letting your confidence catch up with your strength."



You can also lift more by consistently slotting in and attending more frequent, shorter sessions. It's also important to try to stick to a consistent routine rather than starting from scratch whenever you're in the gym.



“I like to keep workouts interesting by incorporating different movements, but at their foundation, they’re really just variations of the same core exercises,” said Greca. “That way it feels fresh and engaging, but you’re still building real strength instead of starting from scratch every week.”

Walk More

Walking is a powerhouse habit for fitness and longevity, but busy schedules too often cause lower than wanted step counts.

To walk more this year, Greca recommended attaching it to obligations or habits you already have. For example, park a little further away from your coffee shop in the morning or ~~take your drink on a quick zin around your~~ block instead of at the table. Walk a quick walk.

Don’t worry about the lengths of

“If long walks aren’t a favorite,
“Five or 10 minute walks, done 
—and they add up.”

Read More

Many people make goals to read more each new year. Dr. Amir Afkhami, a board-certified psychiatrist at GW Medical Faculty Associates, notes that barriers to reading, specifically among midlife women, typically isn't because of lack of motivation but rather lack of time.

To cut against this, consider reframing reading not as a pleasure pursuit but as a wellness one. "Reframe reading as mental health or nervous system care rather than productivity," he advised.

Creating "predictive rituals" for reading will also help you incorporate it into your day-to-day routine. For example, Afkhami recommends setting aside 10 to 15 minutes at the same time each day for reading.

"Ideally it's tied to an existing habit—AKA habit stacking—such as your morning coffee or as part of your wind-down ritual," he said. "This reduces decision fatigue and helps the brain associate reading with safety, relaxation and pleasure rather than an obligation."

Switching up your reading routine can help it stay consistent even when you don't have much time or are too cognitively overwhelmed; try swapping novels for audiobooks, short stories, essays or articles for some variation.

Scroll Less

Doomscrolling, compulsive social media scrolling, is a negative habit that many people have explained. Psychotherapist Esir

"It's a maladaptive way of trying to cope with stress. It's something mindless because their mind has required them all day to be



as a distraction from emotional discomfort ends up becoming an artificial form of dopamine stimulation.”

Getting at *why* you’re scrolling can help curb it. Pinarli recommends asking yourself: “What am I trying to avoid by opening my phone now?”

Replacing phone time with another habit can also be helpful to cut back. “When I go to habitually doomscroll, instead I’ll stretch or listen to music or go outside,” she suggested.

Afkhami recommends reducing or removing alerts and badges on your phone. Doomscrolling too often robs people of sleep, so charging your phone outside of your bedroom (or at least far away from your bed) can help curb this, too.

Stress Less

A resolution to stress less is often easier said than done, given its multifactorial thanks to all the complex demands placed on midlife women.

To make this more manageable, break it down by incorporating individual habits that can reduce stress like exercising, limiting social media use and practicing mindfulness, advised Afkhami.

Pinarli recommends assigning responsibilities to help pull you out of overwhelm. “I work on responding to email as opposed to doing a mini task. Taking intentional pauses is key, too.

Numerous studies have found that social connection is mood improving. “Socially engaged women are happier,” Pinarli says. “Pause and interact with a friend and connect with a friend.”



Drinking less is a common resolution, given the popularity of Dry January.

To start changing habits around drinking, Pinarli recommended some self reflection to figure out why you drink: Is it because you want to socialize, because you're lonely and use it as social lubricant when you're anxious, or is it to self-soothe after a stressful day? Figure out what drives the behavior and address the root cause.

Identify the feeling and then see if there's something else you can do instead to address it. "When we take something out of the equation of our life, we have to put something back in," she said.

Not drinking entirely can seem insurmountable, so taking small steps to drink less by shifting behaviors like having fewer drinks or swapping in some mocktails is helpful.

"It could be, 'Today I'm going to have one drink instead of my usual three with my happy hour crew' and that can give you that sense of accomplishment without feeling deprived," explained Pinarli.

Seeking care from a professional can also be helpful.

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