



NEW YEAR'S 2021

UPHILL BATTLE?

People have been making — and breaking — New Year's resolutions for millennia. But experts say you really can reach your goals

By **AHMED ELBENNI**
BLADE STAFF WRITER

There's a story that Erin Wiley reads every January.

It goes something like this:

You're addicted to junk food, as your scale reminds you every morning. Come the first of January, you decide, a potato chip will never again pass through your lips. The first few days of junk food sobriety are tough, but you soldier through. By the second week you're confident that you've left your nights of donut-binging in the rear-view mirror. Then on Day 22, you find yourself at a party, stressed from a long day at work and rubbing a belly aching from a skipped lunch. Moments later, you're sinking your teeth into a cheesy, greasy slice of pineapple pizza.

Most people who make a New Year's resolution will reach this point. According to a 2015 University of Scranton study, 45 percent of Americans make resolutions at the turn of a new year. One in four will ditch their goal by the end of January. According to the Statistic Brain Research Institute, only eight percent will make it to December.

For Mrs. Wiley, therapist at and owner of the Willow Center, people fail not because they fall, but because they don't get up afterwards. They approach resolutions like

they're players in a knock-out tournament — one loss and you're out. The guilt that accompanies that first bite of pizza typically spurs the offender to eat more of it, not less.

"It's OK to make a mistake," Mrs. Wiley said. "It's OK to not be perfect. Let's try again tomorrow."

In fact, it's those moments of failure that provide opportunities for success. Professor Mojisola Tihamiyu, director of the Community and Positive Research Lab at the University of Toledo, said psychologists have evidence of a "fresh start effect" wherein people are more likely to take productive action following milestones, good or bad.

"Take advantage of this phenomenon," Mrs. Mojisola said. "Treat those moments in which you might be tempted to give up altogether as fresh-start opportunities."

Changing shapes

Perhaps because of this "fresh start effect," human beings have, as noted by Bowling Green State University history professor Scott Martin, "been making resolutions for literally thousands of years."

Four thousand years, to be exact. Historians often trace New Year's resolutions back to the ancient Babylonians. At

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JOE LANDSBERGER

RELATIONSHIPS

Take back your sex life

By **MEAGHAN O'CONNELL**
NEW YORK TIMES

Melissa Petro is a 40-year-old writer who lives in New York with her husband of four years and two children. She and her husband switch off between working and child duty. According to Petro, the always-on nature of parenting a 12-month-old and a 3-year-old in a pandemic has been "relentless, exhausting and not sexy." Recently her husband has been sleeping on the family room couch.

"It's not that I don't want to," she said, "It's just that there's so many things to do besides have sex with my partner, who I do hypothetically find attractive and theoretically want to have sex with. It feels pretty — at times — hopeless, our sex life."

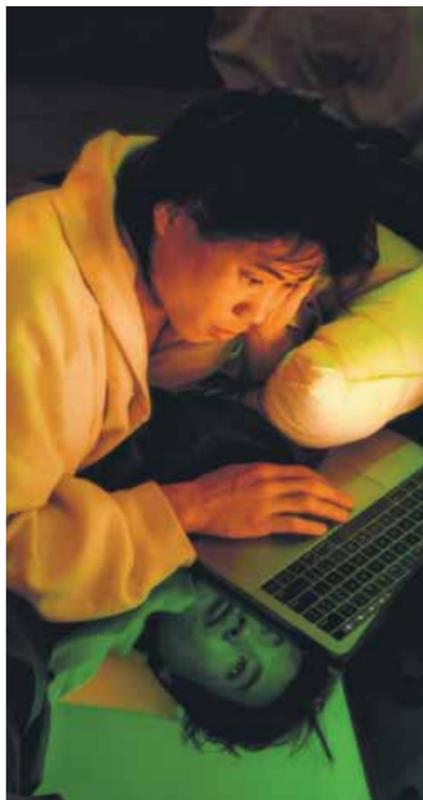
Ms. Petro is not alone. A Kinsey Institute study on the impact of COVID-19 on marital quality found that 24 percent of married people reported having less frequent sex than they did before the

pandemic, and 17 percent of women reported a decrease in both sexual and emotional satisfaction since the pandemic began. Another study from the spring suggested that one-third of couples were experiencing pandemic-related conflict and that many of their sex lives were suffering.

"We are missing out on many parts of our former lives," Maya Luetke, a researcher at the Center for Sexual Health Promotion at Indiana University who led the study, wrote in an email. "Just as this is the last year in other ways, it may also be the last year in terms of sex."

Likewise, Emily Nagoski was not surprised by the data. A sex educator, researcher and author of *Come as You Are: The Surprising New Science That Will Transform Your Sex Life*, Ms. Nagoski describes sexual desire and inhibition like the accelerator and brake in a car. And while right now there are

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JUSTIN J WEE/NEW YORK TIMES

Since the pandemic began in March, millions of Americans have begun working where they sleep.

BUSINESS LIFE

Working from bed isn't bad

By **TAYLOR LORENZ**
NEW YORK TIMES

For years, sleep experts have held one piece of common wisdom above all else: that devices have no place in the bedroom.

Yet since the pandemic began in March, millions of Americans have defied that guidance and begun working precisely where they sleep. They are drafting legal documents, producing events, holding client calls, coding, emailing, studying and writing, all from under the covers.

This wasn't always the plan. Early on, many of them invested in desks and other equipment meant to make their homes as ergonomically sound and office-like as possible.

When New York City shut down in March, Vanessa Anderson, 24, set up a small desk for herself in her living room. She was working for an agency that manages private chefs and wanted to keep some semblance of separation between work and sleep. "For a while I was really committed to not working from my bedroom at all," she said.

In May, Ms. Anderson moved her desk into her bedroom for more light.

"My bed was just sitting there, taunting me," she said. She set ground rules for herself: She'd only get in bed after 2 p.m., but that start time shifted earlier and earlier. Come July, her bed had become her full-time office.

Ms. Anderson has since switched jobs — she works in e-commerce for a spice shop now — and only works remotely part of the week, but still from bed. Talking to others, she's discovered how commonplace the practice is. "I've been on calls with people where we were both in bed," she said. At the end of the call it's like, "How's the pandemic going? Oh, you're in bed right now, too? So am I!"

Working from bed is a time-honored tradition upheld by some of history's most accomplished figures. Frida Kahlo painted masterpieces from her canopy bed. Winston Churchill, a notorious late riser even during World War II, dictated to typists while breakfasting in bed. Edith Wharton, William Wordsworth and Marcel Proust drafted prose and verse from their beds. "I am a completely horizontal author," Truman Capote

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