



New Year, New You: Sustainability Resolutions for 2021

Written by Steven Knepp, Sustainability Coordinator

New Year's Day represents more than just a new day or year for millions of Americans. According to [finder.com](https://www.finder.com), 164 million Americans will make some type of resolution in one or more of the following categories: health, money, self-improvement, love, or career. Just as Americans are quick to make resolutions, they are also quick to forget or abandon their resolutions. [Forbes](https://www.forbes.com) found that 80% of resolutions fail during the month of February. So what causes so many people to stop striving towards their goals? According to Mark Murphy, Senior Contributor for Forbes, emotional commitment and peer pressure tend to be the two largest contributors for lack of success.

I try to make resolutions every year and like the study referenced above I often fail. As I write this, I find myself identifying reasons why I stopped working towards my resolutions. My conclusion: I set the bar too high and never intentionally created small steps or victories. Aside from major life-changing events, most change in our lives happen incrementally. The same should hold true for our resolutions. If your goal is to lose 50 pounds over the next year, set smaller goals of five pounds a month and only focus on those five pounds. If you focus on losing pounds 45 – 50 too soon, you'll never achieve success from the start.

You are probably saying, "This is great and all, Steve. Why are you not talking about sustainability?" Well, the truth is it can be a bit complicated. Creating sustainable resolutions can be as simple as increasing recycling or remembering to turn off the lights when you leave the house. However, the heart of living a sustainable life transcends these types of tasks. Consider this diagram as a model for the intricacies of sustainability.



Looks daunting, doesn't it? It reminds me of staring at that 50-pound weight loss resolution and realizing I am never going to achieve it. So let's break this diagram down to smaller goals and develop some sustainable resolutions to achieve for 2021 and beyond.

Environmental

- Pick up garbage while on walk around the neighborhood or hiking in the woods.
- Plant a [tree native](https://www.treehugger.com) to your area.
- Change sources of electricity to more renewable sources (e.g., solar, geothermal, wind, etc.).

Government

- Write or speak to your representative at the local, commonwealth, and federal levels to address issues impacting your community.
- Run for local office.
- Attend PTO or school board meetings.

Social

- Volunteer at [local non-profits](https://www.volunteer.com).
- Join a local service organization.
- Attend, participate, or volunteer for local culture, art, and heritage celebrations.



Economic

- Shop and eat at [local businesses](#).
- Buy brands that are known for [ethical and sustainable practices](#) for items such as clothes, shoes, and other personal items.
- Rather than buying new, consider [upcycling projects](#) to add to your home décor.

While this list is not exhaustive, I hope it provides a starting point to identifying simple, sustainable ways to live and work. If we all do our part, we can make our community happier, healthier, and positioned to thrive for years to come.