

How did I do on 2012 resolutions?



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My wife has been nagging me — er, lovingly reminding me — that I need to write a followup column on my New Year's resolutions for 2012. A year ago, I wrote about two goals: getting back to writing one column a month and losing weight.

I'll start with the easy one. I wrote 12 columns in 2012! This included my 100th column in September and my 10-year-anniversary column in December.

I wasn't able to write one in every calendar month, missing one in May and October. But I wrote two in July and two in December, so I think that still qualifies as completing that resolution.

(It's ironic that this, my first column of 2013, isn't appearing until February ... darn it, I'm already behind for this year.)

My second 2012 resolution, losing weight, was a little harder to judge. I started the year at 184 pounds and finished at 177. I guess that counts, but most of that loss was in January 2012, so I was hoping for better results than that for the rest of the year.

It certainly was not for lack of trying in the exercise department. Thanks to my handy GPS watch and heart monitor, I was able to keep meticulous record of all my workouts in 2012, which I can sum up nicely with a few Unix scripts:

- 366 days of at least 30 minutes
- 23,153 total minutes (a 19 percent increase over last year's 19,488)
- 63 minutes/day average

They say that to have a new habit become part of your routine, you must

repeat it faithfully for 21 days. As of this writing, I am now past my 800th consecutive day of exercise, which I define as getting into my target heart range for at least 30 minutes.

I think that habit is now solidly formed.

In my post-year analysis a year ago, I had calculated that I averaged 53 minutes per day exercising in 2011. So I upped my goal for 2012 to an hour a day. Therefore my 63 minutes per day average is definitely a success in that category!

It may not have helped my weight all that much, but exercise does have other benefits, even beyond feeling better and increasing stamina. Check out the three-year trend in my cholesterol numbers, with no drugs:

Year	Age	Chol.	Trigyc.	LDL	HDL
2010	50	199	248	118	32
2011	51	173	96	111	43
2012	52	162	77	98	49

Total cholesterol, Triglycerides and LDL are all better when lower, while HDL numbers are better when higher. So I'm improving on all fronts. And this improvement is despite eating two chicken eggs every morning. Exercise is truly the miracle drug!

If you REALLY like details, here's the breakdown of the top 15 activities I did in 2012 to get into my target heart zone:

- 106 days bicycling
- 76 days strength training class
- 71 days running on treadmill
- 40 days elliptical machine
- 34 days walking outside
- 33 days running outside
- 27 days nautilus machines
- 11 days backpacking/hiking
- 10 days walking on treadmill
- 10 days cross country skiing
- Nine days mowing the lawn
- Nine days racquetball
- Nine days tennis
- Eight days canoeing
- Four days shoveling snow

My exercise decision algorithm goes something like this, in order of priority:

1. If it's above 60 degrees, then go biking. Thanks to a warm spring and fall, I biked 1,700 miles last year, the most I've done since 1987! This includes the 256-mile trip I took with two of my sons. That is my all-time favorite workout — it's the one exercise that seems effortless yet produces a very high heart rate.

2. If the Irvine Park trails are groomed, then go cross country skiing. This is a close second to biking for its ability to get my heart rate up while still being fun.

3. If it's a Wednesday or Friday, go to Jill "Killer" Kirchen's strength training class at the YMCA.

4. If none of the above are true and it's been more than two weeks since I last did the Nautilus weight-lifting circuit, then do that.

5. If 1-4 are not true and I did not run yesterday, then run today, either on the treadmill or the road. (My strategy to prevent overuse injury is to avoid running on consecutive days.)

6. If all else fails, do the elliptical machine at the Y or go for a brisk walk.

That's my normal strategy. Exceptions include sports like tennis and racquetball, Boy Scout activities like backpacking and canoeing, and of course, chores like mowing the lawn and shoveling the snow. (As long as I can strap on my heart rate monitor and get into my target zone, chores count!)

So I guess that leaves the other half of the weight-loss strategy — EATING. And dang, what do you know? I'm out of space!

Oh well. There is one goal that I will be LOWERING this year: I plan to exercise on only 365 days.

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