



**EPISODE 167 Afraid you won't achieve your goals this year? Do this and make change happen!**

**With host Dr. Heather Fork**

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HF: “23% of people quit their resolution by the end of the first week and 43% quit by the end of January. One month into the year, there's a good chance we've already fallen off the wagon, so to speak. If you don't want to be a New Year's casualty with your goals, this episode is for you, my friend.”

Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a nonclinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So, pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Welcome back to the Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. I'm your host Heather Fork, and you're listening to episode number 167. I really hope your New Year's off to a great start. This podcast is going live on January 31st, 2024.

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The New Year is a common time for us to make resolutions or goals about what we want to happen this year. And our goals are often related to something we've tried to achieve or change already, but have been unsuccessful. A New Year brings new hope and energy and the chance to have a better outcome or do something completely different, but the statistics are stacked against us. Researchers say that 38% of people make New Year's resolutions each year, but only 9% of people stick to them. In fact, the data shows that 23% of people quit their resolution by the end of the first week, and 43% quit by the end of January.

According to these numbers, if we made a New Year's resolution or a goal for this year, by the time the podcast is live one month into the year, there's a good chance we've already fallen off the wagon, so to speak. Perhaps you've decided that this year you're going to slay that burnout and actually figure out a way to find happiness in your career. Maybe you've set a big goal to get healthier in 2024. This could mean you want to find a way to exercise more regularly, lose some weight, and learn to cook healthy meals. Your goal might be to pay off student loans, meet your soulmate, have a meditation practice, find a side gig or start a business. It could be that you want to have better boundaries and say “no” more to others and say “yes” to your own goals.

Whatever it is you're wanting for yourself and your life, I want to make sure it happens this year. If you don't want to be a New Year's casualty with your goals, this episode is for you, my friend.

Today I'm going to be sharing a simple, yet powerful strategy for setting and achieving goals. I'll explain the strategy that I've been using for myself with great results and then give you some concrete examples so you can start implementing this approach right away.

Okay, drum roll. Are you ready? Here it is. The strategy for success for your goals is to under commit, but keep your commitment. I'll say that again. Under commit, but keep



your commitment. I want to give you an example of how I use this in having a consistent meditation practice. I've been an on and off meditator for probably 20 years, but I'd say since about 2019, I've struggled until recently with having consistent practice again. I would say to myself, "Okay, Heather, you're going to do 20 minutes a day and you're going to do it first thing before anything else." Well, then that didn't work, and then I'd say, "Okay, you just need to do it sometime during the day or maybe 15 minutes." But I never really got consistent. I'd keep falling off the wagon and then be disappointed with myself and trying something else and trying different apps and really just not getting in a groove.

I decided to under commit, but keep my commitment. My commitment is to have a daily meditation practice. A little side here. I'm going to be doing an episode in the near future on meditation, and if you haven't been able to be successful at meditation, I think you're really going to love this. I have some tips and tricks and techniques to help you with this practice, which I really consider mind training because everything really in life, so much comes down to our thoughts and how we think and how we respond.

And the point of meditation is really to have more control and freedom of our mind and our thoughts. I think it can benefit everyone. I just wanted to say I'll be coming through with some help for you in this area in the near future.

Okay, but back to this under commitment in my meditation practice. The under commitment I decided to make was to do one minute a day. Okay, that may sound crazy, like what's the point of one minute? Why even bother? But there's so many great things about having an under commitment. The truth is when I say, "Okay, do one minute", it's pretty much impossible to say, "I don't have time." Even if you're ready to go to bed, you can still do one minute.

And the reason why this is powerful, it's multifactorial. One is it's so much easier to keep your commitment. I like the saying that I heard, which is "The heaviest weight at the

gym, it's the front door." It's just activation energy, it's just getting started. There's a very low activation energy to doing one minute of meditation. You can do it in your car before you go on to work. You can do it even inventorying patients. You can find a minute.

And when you keep that commitment, not only do you get the benefit of whatever it is you're doing, you get the benefit of building the muscle of habit. You build self-respect, you start trusting yourself more. "Okay, I can do this, then I can do two minutes. I can do two minutes consistently? Okay, let's do three." So, you can start building.

You also help avoid the things that tend to make us fall off the wagon and give up, which is self-reproach, disappointment, even feeling ashamed with ourselves and feeling like, "Ugh, I just can't do this."

You might be wondering, "Well, what happens if I make a very small commitment, I under commit and then I can't even do that?" Well, here's the thing, no one is perfect. Life happens even with an under commitment. It's very, very likely that there are times you're just not going to make it. Instead of going 90 miles per hour with a really big goal, that's too much, it's too big, like you're going to make yourself go to the gym five days a week and doing an hour and doing this complicated workout or telling yourself you got to lose 20 pounds in two months.

What you can do instead is when you're working on this smaller goal, maybe you're exercising 10 minutes a day. If you're not able to do that, you're not going so fast that you can't pause and reevaluate and say, "Okay, why wasn't I able to do 10 minutes a day? Was it that I waited too long? Was it that I really wasn't feeling well? I need to give myself some grace. Is it that because maybe this is the wrong approach for me, that instead of running in the neighborhood, I should bike on my peloton?"

Now, I want to share a few examples from clients so we can talk a little bit more about the details of this strategy. The first example is from a client of mine who wanted to

become healthier in terms of her exercise and her weight. And whenever I share examples, I always ask people, "Is it okay if I mention this on the podcast even though I don't share names or identifying details?"

This client had been a hardcore athlete in high school and in college and over time because of medical training as you know, and having young children and having a job where she's sedentary, she happens to work at home remotely on the computer all day long, she got out of shape. She was very unhappy with how things had changed with her health. And so, she tried at first to, in a sense, overcommit by trying to run and trying to do things that she felt she could do before without difficulty. But she kept injuring herself. And that was very discouraging and demoralizing. And there was a part of her that just stopped trying.

But then as we talked, we started exploring, "Well, what's another way she could try getting back in shape?" And what she came up with was an under commitment, but a commitment to moving forward. And so, she decided to find a place that was very close to her house where she could work out with a trainer during the day. When she started with a trainer, she said, "My goal is to not get injured. That's my primary goal. Yes, I do want to get in shape, but whatever pace is necessary so I can keep moving forward is what I want to do."

It's early in this process, but I think it's starting to work well for her where she goes twice a week, it's for a limited period of time and it's with some accountability and someone to help her with this goal.

The second example I want to share is a physician who has been in practice for a good number of years, is very busy, very successful, but she's feeling like she's not making an impact in the way she wants to. And she really loves fitness and nutrition and exercise. And she has learned a lot and created positive change in her own life. And she really



wanted to try wellness coaching to help other people get the kind of benefits that she's been able to.

She asked me, “Well, Heather, should I do a coaching program and start creating a website and start thinking about having this business to be a wellness coach?” And she had also told me that she gets a lot of energy and excitement about a project and doing something new, and she starts out all guns blazing. But then after a period of time, this energy peters out, and for a number of things, they haven't really gotten her to the point where she realizes that this is something I really want to do and continue with. She had this fear that this could happen with this idea of being a wellness coach.

What I recommended to her is this strategy of under committing, but to keep the commitment. And so, what would be an under commitment? What would be what I often call a lemonade stand version of this type of business? Since she already had a fair amount of knowledge about exercise, nutrition, and diet, I said, I don't think you need to start with a coaching program. You know enough already. Get a couple of friends or people that you know to be your test clients. They'll pay a very low rate. You'll let them know that this is something you're just trying out. Get five or six clients and just see how you like it. If you like it, then you can decide, “Alright, do I want to get training? Do I want to get certification and start a business?” Because it can cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 to \$20,000 to get a coaching certification, and it can cost a lot of money to start a website and begin a business. And then you might decide this isn't really what you want it to do.

She's in the process right now of working with these new practice clients and it's giving her a lot of good information without much of a financial investment at all. An obvious benefit in this situation of under committing is that you get information sooner rather than later. If you do a coaching program that could take at least a year, and then it could take another year trying to get a business up and off the ground, and then two years have passed, and then you realize “I actually really don't like working one-on-one with people.”

If there's something new that you're wanting to do or try out, think about what is the lemonade stand version? What is the smallest version of under commitment you can make to get some information to decide if this is a warmer, colder situation? Is this something I really want to move forward on or not?

The next example I want to share is from a physician who's doing this program, it's outside of medicine, but it's something that she's interested in. And as part of this program, you meet monthly on Zoom with a group of people, and there's a breakout time where you're in a pod with three individuals and you're supposed to share something about yourself for five minutes that's happened during this past month.

And she told me that when it's her turn to share, even though she has five minutes, in about one minute she's done. She just doesn't feel comfortable taking up more time. And the other people are fine talking for five minutes. And I said to her, "You're a talker. You're really good at talking. What's going on?" And she said, "Well, I don't know. I just don't feel like I have anything to say. And so after one minute, I'm just done." And I said, "Well, what is one of the goals that you have for this year in general for yourself?" And her main goal was to get uncomfortable and do things that were a bit of a stretch for her. And I said, "Oh, that's a great goal. Well, in this situation, it's obviously a bit uncomfortable for you. Do you have a goal of what you'd really like to do here?" And she said, "Well, yeah, I actually would like to be able to take up more space and talk more and share what I have to say." And I followed up with "What would be an under commitment, but a commitment you want to keep?" And she said, "Okay, all right, I'll do two minutes. That's my commitment. I'll do two minutes in my commitment to be uncomfortable."

We talked about that. And so, once she's doing two minutes comfortably, she can go to three minutes. And I know this might sound like, "Oh brother, this isn't a big deal." But I



know a lot of you tell me, “Well, I don't really speak up in meetings and I let other people talk and I have to really be upset about something to share.”

It's really important to be able to have a voice and be heard. And if it helps you to make an under commitment, make a small commitment the next time you're in a meeting, “Okay, I'm going to say one thing or I'm going to respond to somebody else, or I'm not going to just sit there in silence.” Whatever it is that helps you meet your goal, find something that is a baby step or just helps you move forward without feeling like it's too much of a stretch for you.

Let me just share a couple more details about applying this strategy before we wrap up. We already talked about starting with a low barrier of entries. Think about in your own situation what would be the minimal amount of commitment that you would like to make. And that can be time, it can be frequency, it can be just something that feels challenging. What's the minimum challenge you want to give yourself?

It might be an example of getting healthier. Instead of trying to lose weight, start on a diet all of a sudden and go and exercise and create all of your meals, it might be just start first with your diet.

Then when you feel like you have a good handle on that and you're making progress, then add in some exercise and start lower than maybe you even think you need to. But then as soon as you feel like you're meeting those lower barrier of entry goals, step it up a little bit. You might start with “One time a week, I'm going to go to the gym, or one time a week I'm going to do 10 minutes of yoga or general stretching.” Once you're doing that consistently, you can bump it up again. You can decide when you're going to reevaluate your commitment and change it.

You can also decide that this goal I committed to is not something that works for me, and that's okay. For example, the client who is trying out the wellness coaching. After



doing six clients, she may even decide “After all, this isn't really something I wanted to do.” That's not breaking your commitment, that's just deciding that I got the information I needed and I'm going to do something different.

Another thing I want to say is that when you feel like you failed at your goal or keeping the commitment, don't judge yourself. Get curious and you will learn and not lose. Because we often think, “Oh, I failed at that. I'm a loser. I can't do this.” That energy isn't really helpful. It's fine to feel disappointed in yourself, but instead of judging yourself, get curious and figure out what went wrong. Did I not prioritize the time? Was it hard for me to figure out what I really wanted to do? So I threw darts, or maybe I'm putting too much pressure on myself. Maybe I'm trying too hard to do this all myself, or I'm letting doubts get in the way.

But do a little bit of analysis, and that way you don't get into the cycle of, “Oh yeah, I'm trying another diet yet again and it's not working. Or I lose weight and then it comes back on.” Because the answers are really going to be there for you if instead of getting angry at yourself and feeling like a failure, but on that analytical mind that you use with patients, especially when you're having trouble with a particular case, you get curious. Put on that detective's cap, say, “Alright, let me try something different, get creative, try a different approach. Maybe my goal is wrong in the first place.” But whatever it is, you can find something of value when you look with the eyes of curiosity and not blame.

Before I go, I wanted to share a quote from James Clear, who wrote the excellent book Atomic Habits. He said, “Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. The same way that money multiplies your compound interest, the effects of your habits multiply as you repeat them. They seem to make little difference on any given day, and yet the impact they deliver over the months and years can be enormous.”

Here's to cheering you on with whatever habits you find are going to support your commitment to your goals, both small and large. I really hope 2024 is a transformative



year for you. I'd love to hear about how the strategy of under committing, but keeping your commitment is being helpful for you and your goals.

Please connect with me on LinkedIn. Send me a message. You can reach me at [team@doctorscrossing.com](mailto:team@doctorscrossing.com). I love to hear from you. And as always, don't forget to carpe that diem and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye for now.

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Podcast details

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