

How to stick to those healthier and happier promises, even if your poolside memories are disappearing fast

BY THE END of your trip away, you should be feeling, well, pretty fantastic. According to new research by Thomas Cook, 36% of us increase our daily intake of fruit and veg on holiday, and 65% of us say we feel we're more active. What's more, a week in the sun can't fail to have slashed your stress levels.

'Holidays give you a chance to relax and see the bigger picture,' says life coach Claire Bradford. 'But it's all too easy to forget the promises you made and slip back into old habits if you haven't already got an action plan in place on the flight home.'

Here's how to stick to your resolutions, without having them written on your forehead in permanent marker pen.

Make your holiday resolutions happen!



Resolution: 'I was really healthy on holiday. From now on I'm going to do things that are good for me'

STICK TO IT! 'If you've come home feeling more energetic and slimmer, think about the reasons why,' advises Bradford. 'When you're travelling back, write down what made you unhealthy in the first place. Maybe you spent the majority of the year drinking too much or not getting enough exercise.'

'Next to each point jot down one way you can improve the situation,' says Bradford. For example, if you find it difficult to keep track of just how many glasses of wine you've had, you could make a pact with yourself to visit www.alcoholtracker.org, an interactive website from Cancer Research UK that allows you to monitor your drinking habits while comparing them to recommended levels.

Resolution: 'I'll stop stressing about my body'

STICK TO IT! 'When you're on holiday you're able to lavish more attention on yourself, so rather than just slapping on a bit of body lotion before dashing out of the bathroom, you go the whole hog by exfoliating, moisturising and self-tanning,' says Bradford. 'Psychologically, this makes you feel better about yourself because it sends a message to your brain that you're worth a little pampering.'

LOVE YOUR WOBBLES BY:

Smiling at yourself in the mirror: A grin instantly makes you look more attractive and fills your brain with feel-good chemicals.

Repeating these mantras: 'I'm working on having the best body I can' or 'I'm healthy and happy.' Always use the present tense to show you accept yourself how you are right now.

Indulging in new lingerie: If you don't particularly like your bum but you love your cleavage, treat yourself to a sexy bra.

Resolution: 'I'll make more me-time'

STICK TO IT! 'Draw two columns on a piece of paper. Write a list of goals (for example, girls' nights out) in one and general tasks such as food shopping in the other,' says Dr Max Blumberg. 'Then schedule in your diary what day and time you plan to achieve some of these things. This will make you put your happiness first, while still ensuring the fridge is full!'

Resolution: 'I'm going to learn something new'

STICK TO IT! 'If you jet back before the end of September, you'll be in time for the start of term at your local education centre,' says Bradford. 'Perhaps you'd like to learn French, but don't have time for an evening class. Do an audio course instead. Five minutes a day could be one giant step towards achieving your goal.'

Resolution: 'I'll sharpen my mind and read more'

STICK TO IT! Too busy for Sudoku? Read on for alternative ways to anti-age your brain.

Join a book club: 'You'll be set the task of finishing a book by a certain time, giving you a real sense of achievement,' says Bradford.

Practise speed-reading: Scan a newspaper, so you absorb the info twice as fast. Researchers at Harvard University have found that speeding up your thoughts can make you more creative.

Resolution: 'From now on, I'm going to get out more'

STICK TO IT! Want to be as sociable as you were on your trip? Bradford has this simple advice:

'Turn off the TV. Psychological studies show those with an active social life are happiest. Book a babysitter in advance for a regular night out and use that time to go to the theatre or try a new restaurant. Having something to look forward to is what makes holidays so exciting.'

Top tip

Scientists have found that we're most likely to see our resolutions through if they're genuinely something we want to do, write down the actions we're going to take and tell others of our intentions. So fill in this table and show it to your best friend.

I WANT TO...	ACTION PLAN	DEADLINE
E.g. Learn to salsa	Contact your local dance studio	Two weeks