

# The 52-Week Challenge

By Leon Scott Baxter

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Beginning of the year. Time to start making promises to change our lives for the better again. The problem with resolutions is that, although they look good on paper, only about 50% of us stick with them the first few months of the year, and only a paltry 20% can ride them through the entire twelve months.

We all have the best intentions, but often have no real long-term plan to see our resolutions through to fruition. Americans' top resolutions focus on health (going to the gym, losing weight, drinking and smoking less), finances (save more, spend less, get out of debt) and careers (stand up to my boss, ask for a raise, reduce stress in the office, find a better job). But one we often neglect is to make our relationships stronger, to bring romance back to our lives.

Although finances, work, and health are incredibly important facets of our lives to improve, focusing on the connection you have with your partner needs to be right up there in the top four. Studies have shown that men and women who are happy in their relationships are mostly happy overall in their lives.

I often give advice to couples: "Focus on romance just once a week for 52 weeks. If you can last a year, you can last an eternity."

Well, back at the beginning of 2005, I decided to put my money where my mouth is. Time to get a taste of my own medicine. I'd been so busy with writing my book, creating my website and offering others advice on relationships that I wasn't focusing on my own as I had. So, I decided to take the 52 Week Challenge: every week I needed to make a concerted effort to do something romantic (something different each week – couldn't have 52 bouquets delivered through the year) for my wife. Should be a piece of cake for America's Romance Guru, right?

Like most New Year's resolutions, I went at this challenge with gusto during January and February, writing love notes, making romantic meals, and

offering back massages. But as May and June approached, I found the wind leaving my sails. The challenge was becoming, well, er, uh,... a challenge.

But, I pushed through. And, you know what? It started to become easier. I speak with folks who get to a wall in their resolutions; they just don't want to go to the gym on a given day, which leads to a gymless week, then a month. They give in and smoke just one cigarette, which eventually leads back to a pack. But, that wall is just the resolution testing you. If you can drag your behind out of bed and back to Gold's Gym, if you can resist that Camel Light's pleas of, "Light me. Just a couple of puffs," you are rewarded with the "downhill coast".

After the sixth month mark, things got easier and I coasted downhill. The romance became a lot more natural, part of my everyday life. I'd wake up Sunday morning, make my romance plan for the week and be sure it was completed by Saturday.

Month ten, the hill leveled out. I was running out of ideas. I'd used all the good ones (i.e. "easy ones") already. So, I had to be more creative, look up ideas on the web and in books. For couples who take the 52 Week Challenge, I remind them that I offer a daily romance tip on my website ([CouplesCommittedToLove.com](http://CouplesCommittedToLove.com)) so they won't fall into the "tenth month struggle" I fell into.

Like the other 20% of Americans who can hang tough for the year with their January promises, I found my resolution had become habit. That's really why we resolve at the beginning of the year, so we can change how we're currently doing things, not for the year, but for a lifetime: fit for life, financially secure for life, a strong relationship for life.

In 2006, I breathed a sigh of relief, knowing my Sunday mornings would not be spent choosing a romance plan for the week. But, I also found that I didn't need to. Keeping romance in our relationship on a regular basis was a part of who I'd become. Like brushing my teeth everyday, reading the Sunday paper, and going to the dentist twice a year, showing my wife I loved her was a part of who I was again.

We all fall into the romance-less rut from time to time. You don't have to wait until January to pull yourself , though. You can resolve to take the 52 Week Challenge any time during the year. If you stick with it, you'll be

happier. Your partner will feel loved and your relationship will be stronger than ever.

Happy New Year.