

FIT

Banish Blue Monday: Tips on Keeping Resolutions



INAUGURATION EVE threatens to rain on Barack Obama's parade. That's because the third Monday in January — aka "**Blue Monday**"— is the most depressing day on the calendar.

"Traditionally, it's the first day of the year when most people have broken their New Year's resolutions, they've gotten their first credit card statement, and the weather is still pretty bad," says local life coach **Caroline Adams Miller**, author of "[Creating Your Best Life](#)" (\$19.95, Sterling Pub Co. Inc.). "So, you've got this trifecta of terrible things going on in the outside world that conspire to make you feel pretty blue."

Find out how to harness happiness at her book signing at the [Bethesda Barnes and Noble](#) (4801 Bethesda Ave.) Thursday at 7:30 p.m. In the meantime, here's a preview.

» **EXPRESS:** What can we do to avoid falling prey to Blue Monday?
 » **MILLER:** The most important thing to do is to not be a quitter. You have to have grit. So, if we just attack the whole issue of new year's resolutions, it's important to take a look at if that's a piece of what's making you blue. Did you set too many willpower goals? The newest research on self-regulation shows that you can only set one self-regulation goal at a time. So, if you set three, which is pretty common — stop smoking, lose weight, start exercising — you're bound to fail.

Number two, take the social contagion piece and look at who is around you who's undermining your goals. You have to take a look at the flock you're in because birds of a feather do flock together. Number three, there are seven research-tested, empirically validated ways to improve your mood: exercise; meditation; journal writing; using your strengths in new and different ways; practicing forgiveness; expressing gratitude; and finally, setting goals.

» **EXPRESS:** Will Obama-mania help?
 » **MILLER:** One of the things about President-elect Obama that's really interesting, from my perspective, is that people feel hopeful. And change and novelty make the brain happier. They release certain feel-good chemicals. A piece of what's happened with the election of a man who ran on a platform of change is that people feel hopeful. Hope theory states — and it has been proven — that when people are hopeful, they think differently, they behave more proactively, they think of more solutions to how to accomplish their goals.

» **EXPRESS:** Can we make that excitement last?
 » **MILLER:** One of the most important things people can do is be accountable to other people. You can hire a coach, you can have a goals buddy, you can do a masterminds group where you invite several other proactive friends to meet with you once a month to share goals and your progress on goals. Keep your goals front and center. You also have to savor the wins along the way. You can't just have little steps that are successful and ignore them.

» **EXPRESS:** Where do you go to cheer up?
 » **MILLER:** I rollerblade from the Bethesda Barnes and Noble on the Capital Crescent Trail down to Georgetown, and then I rollerblade all the way back. That combines several of the things that have been proven to make people happier, including getting into a state of flow while exercising, and I listen to music, and it's beautiful scenery; I'm seeing things that I love to look at.

Written by Express contributor Stephanie Kanowitz

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