KESTON SCHOOL

HUMAN BEHAVIOR · FREE SAMPLE

Goals That Last

Set fewer yearly goals and keep them going well past February

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will have one to three goals you actually chose, each written as a weekly action you can steer, a monthly review that catches drift early, and a plan for the weeks when life gets in the way, so this year's goals are still alive in December.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Goals That Last Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

The February Fade

Recognize the yearly pattern of bold January goals that quietly fade, and why a longer list and more willpower never fix it.

It is the first week of January. You have a fresh notebook, a new planner or a note on your phone titled "This Year." On it are eight goals. Run a half marathon. Save for a trip. Learn Spanish. Read twenty-four books. Get promoted. Cook at home more. Call your parents every Sunday. Finally finish the bathroom.

The first two weeks go well. You run three times. You download the language app. You cook on Tuesday and Thursday. Then work picks up, someone gets sick, a weekend disappears into errands, and one evening you realize you have not opened the language app in nine days. By March, the list is still on your phone. You just do not look at it anymore.

The quiet drop-off

The striking thing about this pattern is how quiet it is. Goals rarely end with a decision. Nobody sits down on February 20th and says, "I am officially giving up on running." The goal simply stops coming up. You skip a week, then another, and the gap becomes the new normal without you ever choosing it.

Because there is no moment of failure, there is also no moment of learning. You never ask what went wrong, so next January you write a very similar list and expect a different result. The fade repeats, year after year, and each round leaves a small dent in how much you believe your own plans.

If this sounds familiar, it does not mean you lack discipline. It means the way most of us set goals is built to fade.

Why more willpower does not fix it

The usual advice when a goal fades is to try harder. Want it more. Find your motivation. Write the goals bigger, put them on the fridge, tell everyone. These ideas feel energizing in January, which is exactly the problem. They add pressure at the start and do nothing for the middle.

Willpower is good at short bursts. It can get you out the door on a cold morning. It is poor at carrying a goal through a busy April, a sick child or a hard month at work. Relying on it is like planning a long road trip with a full tank and no idea where the gas stations are.

The longer list makes things worse. Every goal on it asks for the same limited resources: your evenings, your weekends, your attention and your energy after work. Eight goals are not eight separate projects. They are eight claims on the same few hours. When the week gets tight, they fight each other, and usually they all lose.

> **Key idea:** Goals rarely fail because you did not want them enough. They fail because there were too many of them, they had no weekly action, and nobody checked on them until it was too late.

What actually keeps goals alive

Look at the goals people do keep for a full year, and a few patterns show up. They are few in number. They are tied to a reason the person can explain in one sentence. They come with a specific thing to do each week, not just a result to hope for. And somebody, usually the person themselves, looks at them regularly and adjusts.

None of this is dramatic. There is no special mindset or morning ritual involved. It is closer to how a careful gardener works: plant fewer things, water them on a schedule, check them often and pull the weeds before they take over.

This book gives you that kind of system, in plain steps:

- A way to choose one to three goals that are worth a full year of your time.
- A one-page goal card that turns each goal into a weekly action you can steer.
- A thirty-minute monthly review that catches drift before it becomes a quiet drop-off.
- A plan for the weeks and months when life gets in the way.
- Simple routines that keep your goals on the calendar instead of in a forgotten note.

What this book is and is not

This is a practical book about choosing and keeping yearly goals. It works for personal goals, work goals, creative projects and the everyday side of health and money goals, such as moving more or saving for something specific.

It is not medical, financial or career advice. If your goal involves a health condition, a major change in diet or exercise, debt or investing, talk to a doctor or a qualified adviser about the specifics. This book will help you with the part that usually breaks down anyway: turning a good intention into something you still do in October.

It also does not require you to start on January 1st. The new year is a natural moment to set goals, and that is why this book is built around it. But the same tools work in March, in your birthday month or on any ordinary Monday.

Try this

Within the next seven days, set aside fifteen minutes and look back honestly at last year's goals. If you wrote them down, find the list. If not, write down what you remember wanting to change.

For each goal, mark one of three things:

1. **Kept** — you were still working on it, or finished it, by the end of the year.
2. **Faded** — it stopped without a decision.
3. **Dropped on purpose** — you chose to stop.

Then, for the faded ones, write one line on roughly when they faded and what was going on in your life at the time. Do not judge the list. You are collecting evidence, not grading yourself.

Most people find that the faded column is the longest and that the fading happened earlier than they thought. Keep this list. You will use it in chapter 5.

In the next chapter, we look at why big goals stall in the first place, so you can see the mechanism behind the February fade.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most goals do not fail loudly. They fade quietly by spring.
- More willpower and a longer list make the fade more likely.
- Lasting goals need fewer choices, clearer actions and regular checkpoints.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 The February Fade

Collect honest evidence about last year's goals, without grading yourself.

FILL IN

Last year's goals

Goal	Kept / Faded / Dropped	Roughly when it faded	What was going on

CHECKLIST

Fixes I have relied on before

- [ ] Trying harder and wanting it more
- [ ] Writing a longer, bigger list
- [ ] Telling everyone in January
- [ ] Buying something to get started

Looking at the list, what surprises you most about when and how your goals faded?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Goals That Last and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 The February Fade

02 Why Big Goals Stall

03 What Dropped Goals Cost

04 Fewer Goals, Clearer Reasons

05 Choose Goals Worth Keeping

06 Write a Goal You Can Steer

07 The Monthly Review

08 Four Common Yearly Goals

09 When the Plan Breaks

10 Put Goals on the Calendar

11 Years That Add Up

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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