

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

The Fresh Start Effect: Why September Feels Like a New Beginning

Even if you are not going back to school, September seems to mark the beginning of a new year. It is the time we 'get back into it' and return to our routines after summer. You may find yourself looking to create a schedule, establish routines, organize your home or set new goals.

But why does September have this effect on us?



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Explain the Fresh Start Effect

The Fresh Start Effect is a behavioral science concept describing how people are significantly more motivated to tackle goals and change habits following "temporal landmarks" like the start of a new week, month, year, birthday, or a major life change.

It has been suggested there are two main reasons why temporal landmarks work;

- It creates discontinuities in time perception that makes people feel disconnected from their past imperfections and failures. We essentially feel like we started a new chapter or have a new beginning which can create feelings of hopefulness and determination.
- It disrupts people's focus on the day-to-day and encourages them to think 'big picture' while reflecting on the past period of time. For example, reflecting on your past year at New Years or a birthday while simultaneously thinking about the upcoming year.



Why This Can Be Helpful

The Fresh Start Effect can have a meaningful impact on our motivation and behaviour if we intentionally harness it.

The most notable outcome is reports of increased self efficacy. Meaning that people have an increased belief that they will succeed in their specific situation. Like successfully sticking to a New Year's resolution or sticking to an exercise routine if they start on Monday. Self efficacy helps us view tasks as challenges opposed to difficulties or barriers.



This in turn changes how we make decisions. Whoever said ‘when you believe it, you can achieve it’, wasn’t wrong. When we believe that we are better than our past selves we make decisions that reflect that belief. So if we believe we are healthier than we were last month or even yesterday we make daily decisions that reflect the belief.

The Fresh Start Effect can also trigger our motivation. It shifts our attention from short-term tasks to long-term goals. When we perceive the start of a new phase, we often feel a surge of motivation to better ourselves. It has been suggested by researchers that each temporal landmark acts as a ‘decision point’ that redirects focus toward activities that align with our broader goals and life aspirations.

But There’s a Catch....

Unfortunately the Fresh Start Effect has its limitations. That initial rush of enthusiasm and optimism can wane or even disappear if we set overly ambitious goals or lack a clear plan for execution. For some it can even turn into a feeling of pressure and comparison making it difficult for them to embrace the fresh start narrative. Instead of “I’m going to go for a walk twice a week” it becomes “I’m going to completely change my life”, which is unrealistic without setting functional, realistic short-term and long-term goals.



To help avoid this trap we need to stop asking ‘what do I need to change about myself?’ and start asking "What already supports my well-being that I'd like to continue with, build on or return to?". Examples of this can be eating breakfast, reading before bed, calling a friend, going for a walk.

Practical Strategies to Get (Fresh) Started

Set specific, Measurable Goals

Aim for clear objectives that can help create structure in your routine. Instead of aiming to eat healthier, consider incorporating fruits or vegetables into one meal a day.

Create Micro Landmarks

Break larger goals into smaller milestones that can give you the opportunity to review your progress. For example, reviewing finances at the beginning of every month if your goal is to save money. This will help you become more in tune with your goal and what you need to do to achieve it.



Visualize Success

Picture yourself successfully completing the behaviours that move you toward your goal—not just achieving the end result. This can help you increase your commitment to your goal and reinforce positive feelings and associations that can help you stay motivated.

Build Accountability

Share your plans with friends, family, colleagues, neighbours or whoever may be interested. Social accountability increases the likelihood of follow-through by creating external incentives to persist. In a nutshell, these people will ask you about it and your going to want to have something to tell them.

Celebrate the Small Wins

Life can be boring if you don't make it exciting. Celebrate every step closer to your goal, pause and reflect on the work you have put in. This will help you reward yourself and appreciate your own efforts.

As September arrives, it's natural to feel the pull toward a fresh start. Whether you're returning to school, settling back into work, or simply adjusting to a new season, this transition offers an opportunity to reflect on what is working well and where small changes could support your well-being. Remember, meaningful change doesn't require a complete reinvention of who you are. More often, it comes from consistently choosing small, intentional actions that align with the life you want to create. This September, instead of striving for perfection, consider giving yourself permission to simply begin. Every positive choice—no matter how small—is a step toward building habits that support your health, happiness, and future.

Updates, This & That

Clinic Closed - Labour Day

Please note that the clinic will be closed for Labour Day on September 7th.

Chiropractic and Psychotherapist Day!

We will be acknowledging National Chiropractic Day on September 18th and National Psychotherapist day on September 25th

Did You Know?

- September gets its name from "septem," the Latin word for seven, because it was the seventh month on the early Roman calenda
- Newfoundland has a festival dedicated to pickles? Visit PicklePalooza on September 12, 2026, for a pickle festival with food, music, and a market.
- Google was Launched by Larry Page and Sergey Brin on September 4, 1998