Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Colin Lowther. And I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. Today’s Spotlight is on New Year’s resolutions. People celebrate the beginning of each year at different times depending on their cultural traditions. But one of the most common times to celebrate the New Year is by the Gregorian calendar. People also call this way of measuring days, months and years the Western or Christian calendar. On this calendar, the first day of the new year is January 1. People call this holiday “New Year’s Day”. People love to celebrate New Year’s Day. Some celebrate with parties and music. They may sing traditional songs about old times and good friends. Some people celebrate quietly with family and friends. Other people go to church on New Year’s Day. People may ask each other, and God, for forgiveness for the wrong things that happened the year before. People can leave their mistakes in the old year. Instead, they look to the future. They think about how they can make the new year better, or different, than the year before. One common way people try to make a new beginning is by making New Year’s resolutions. A New Year’s resolution is a promise you make to yourself. It usually means a change of behavior or a new goal. For example: This year, I promise to eat healthy food. This year, I promise to exercise more. I promise to give more money to the poor. I promise to be kind to my sister. I promise to finish school this year. People believe that the first New Year’s resolutions were made thousands of years ago by the Babylonians. The most popular New Year’s resolution for the ancient Babylonians was to return borrowed farm equipment! Today, the most popular New Year’s resolutions are usually ways for people to improve themselves. People promise to do things like stop smoking or pay back money that they owe. People also commonly make resolutions about relationships and health. On the first day of the New Year people feel great about the changes they hope to make. But what happens after some time has passed? Experts say that most people do not keep their resolutions for very long. The University of Scranton in the United States studied New Year’s resolutions in 2014. They found that one week after New Year’s Day only 75% of people have kept their resolutions. This number drops down to 65% after one month. Less than half of people keep their New Year’s resolutions for more than six months. There are many reasons why people often do not keep their resolutions. The main reason is that it is difficult to make changes. But there are a few ways to make it easier to make good changes. Spotlight producers Michio Ozaki, Bruce Gulland and Rena Dam each share a way to make - and keep, resolutions: Be realistic and detailed. Many people make a goal that is too big or not clear. Your resolution may be to learn English better. But you may not know how to make that happen! Instead, make a resolution that is smaller and more detailed. For example, “I will listen to a Spotlight English program two times every week.” Or, “I will speak English every day.” Making smaller goals will help you to get better at the exact thing you want to do. It will also make you able to measure your success. And that will be encouraging! Get as much support as you can. Ask other people to help you remember your resolutions. When you make a promise to someone else, it is easy to remember. It will also make you want to keep your resolution. Some people make resolutions with someone else. For example, if you wanted to exercise more, you could plan to exercise with a friend. Then you can encourage each other and have fun too. Even if you have no one to help you keep your resolution, there are websites on the internet that offer help. One website sends encouraging information about your resolution, such as information about exercising. The website will even send emails to help you remember your resolution. Start one new healthy habit to replace every unhealthy one. Many people make New Year’s resolutions to stop bad habits. These habits may be things like eating unhealthy food, or playing too many video games. It is difficult just to stop a habit. Instead, replace it with something else. For example, instead of eating unhealthy food snacks, plan healthy things to eat. Make a resolution to eat more fruits and vegetables. Or, in the case of video games, replace the habit with something healthier. Make a resolution to get more exercise. At the times you would play a video game, play a sport with your friends instead. However, sometimes a bad habit is not just a habit. Sometimes a bad habit is really an addiction. Substances like cigarettes or alcohol can cause dependence. A person’s mind or body depends on these substances. For example, when you stop using cigarettes, you may feel sick. You will want the cigarettes very badly. Stopping an addiction is much more difficult than stopping a bad habit. If you are stopping an addiction, look for more help. Visit our website for more ideas. It is also good to remember that no one is perfect. Even if we fail one day, we can keep working on our resolutions. The Christian Bible uses the word perseverance to talk about keeping promises. Perseverance means continuing to do something even if it is difficult. To persevere, a person needs to be patient and strong. But we do not have to struggle alone. The Bible also says that God will be with us and help us: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for good and not for evil, plans to give you a future and a hope.” With this hope, it is easier to have perseverance. People may forget their New Year’s resolutions or want to give up. But everyone can remember these helpful ideas: Make detailed goals and get help from friends. Start new good habits as you stop old bad ones. Remind yourself and others that you are not alone. And with perseverance, good changes can last throughout the whole year. The writers of this program were Sara DeKoster and Rena Dam. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, ‘New Year’s Resolutions’. Tell us what you think about today’s program. You can leave a comment on our website. Or email us at radio@radioenglish.net. And find us on Facebook - just search for Spotlight Radio. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.