

The Real Resolution

Contributed by Althea Lawton-Thompson
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Every year we do it - vow to make exercise and eating right our #1 (or 2 or 3) priority, starting in January. But really how many of us are able to stick to the stringent plan of going to the gym and working out for 45 minutes at least 5 days a week?

Or how about never eating after 7:00 p.m.? Maybe your resolution is to stop snacking on high fat chips, pork rinds and cheese twists – FOREVER!

For some of us, something happens between the first week in January and the end of March that takes us off our path of fitness success. (Do we even make it to March?) What gives - why is it so hard to stick to the resolution of being fit, eating right and achieving the goal weight we've set for ourselves? The problem is not our will power - it's the unrealistic goals we set for ourselves in the beginning. It's a setup for failure.

Do yourself a favor this year – set a few realistic, easy-to-follow, short term goals that are an improvement over what you are currently doing (or not doing). Here are a few examples of things to help you achieve success in the area of health and wellness this new year:

- Take stock of what you're currently eating during the day. Start a food diary and record every item you put in your mouth, when, how much and how you were feeling when you ate. At the same time, begin a movement journal and write down any activity that you did for more than 15 minutes - even sex! Sometimes, just keeping track of what's happening helps you focus on things you wouldn't normally consider. Perhaps it will motivate you to put down a piece of candy you don't need or get up and do something when you'd normally sit and rest after a mentally stressful day.
- If you're a soda, coffee or juice drinker, try to replace one drink a day with a cup, glass or bottle of water. Just one. That's right – only one. Do it for 2 weeks before replacing two drinks with water. Do that for the remainder of the month. This type of slow change gives your body a chance to get used to the change you've introduced.
- If you are currently not very physically active, a good short term goal might be to walk for 15 minutes 2x a week. I didn't say you had to buy new shoes, don a sweat suit and jog. Just walk... anywhere, for any reason, for 15 minutes. If you can do that 4x in the next two weeks, you're ready to either add a day or increase your time from 15 minutes to maybe 20 minutes. Stick to this new change for another 2-3 weeks and allow your body to get used to the new change you've introduced.
- Exercise doesn't have to be something you dread. Find something you like doing. Do you dislike lifting dumbbells? Do you hate being in the gym with people gawking at each other? Get a video and work out with your friends in someone's house. Does fresh air invigorate you? Go outside and be a kid again - try making it all the way across the monkey bars. And when you get done, skip rope. Maybe you could join a bowling league or a softball team at the local park. Rollerskating is not only fun, it's also a great workout for the heart, legs and butt.

Whatever you decide to do, resolve to be realistic and patient. Those are two beneficial resolutions to help you all year round.

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