

HEALTHY RESOLUTIONS FOR THE WHOLE YEAR

As the first few months of the new year slip away, do you find your resolutions slipping away as well?

Resolutions should be reasonably attainable so that you are setting yourself up for success rather than disappointment. Try focusing on small intermediate goals that will ultimately lead you to your primary goal. Do not expect to be perfect. Aim for a healthy lifestyle with which you will feel comfortable.

Take Small Steps

Simply establishing the goal of leading a healthy lifestyle should make you feel good about yourself. To make that goal more attainable, come up with small goals that you know you can meet each day to help keep yourself feeling positive. Accomplishing the smaller goals will leave you with a more immediate feeling of success.

If your goals are too large, you may get caught up in them and feel disappointed when you do not see immediate results.

Small behavior-change plans are easier to stick to than vague resolutions like "I will lose 10 pounds." If your resolution is too large, add a plan of action that will guide you toward your goal.

Rather than "I will exercise more," try "I will go for a walk at lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays and work out in the gym Mondays and Fridays." This way you can feel a sense of accomplishment every day, and if you miss a day, you can get right back on track rather than feeling like a failure.

Change for Yourself

Any goals that you set should come from a sincere desire to change for yourself. Research has shown that negative feelings are a frequent cause of relapse in behavior-change programs, and resolutions that feel like punishment can cause negative feelings.

All resolutions should be perceived as positive changes that will help you reach optimal health and well-being. Don't decide to change to please anyone other than yourself.

And remember, resolutions are an opportunity for you to look forward in a positive way rather than to punish yourself for past behaviors.

Be Creative

Perhaps you can find ways to exercise while also accomplishing other goals. If weather permits, try walking to do errands that are in close proximity to your home or office. Maybe you want to spend more time with your family. Try walking with a family member or bringing your children along on bikes while you walk or jog.

If your goal is to make new friends, try taking classes where you will meet other people who share your same exercise interests.

Be Realistic

Be sure that your plan of action is realistic. Plan to work out at times when it is convenient for you. If you are not a morning person, do not plan to work out early in the morning or you'll just be setting yourself up for failure.

Try to make things as easy as possible for yourself. Set your goals at reasonable heights so that you can reach them one by one without feeling overwhelmed.

The only way your goal is going to become reality is if you believe in it and, most of all, if you believe in yourself. It may help you reinforce your goal if you can find a realistic role model who is actually living your goal. If he or she can do it, so can you!

Anticipate Roadblocks and Reward Yourself for Successes

If things like weather and illness will prevent you from sticking to your plan, make alternate plans for situations that you cannot avoid. Most importantly, do not let a missed day or two throw you completely off target. Instead, do your best to get back on track as quickly as possible, which should not be extremely difficult if you have set appropriate goals.

It is easier to stick to your plan when you feel good about yourself. Try to find a new way to reward yourself when you meet your smaller goals. If you are trying to eat healthier, be sure that all of your meals are still delicious, and allow yourself a small dessert after a few days of healthy habits.

Be sure to get involved in activities that keep you feeling happy and fulfilled.

Build a Support System

Get the support of your family, friends and coworkers. If your resolution involves quitting a serious addiction like smoking or drinking or overcoming an eating disorder, get professional help and join a support group if possible.

Remember that you are your best supporter. You are trying to improve your own health. Appreciate what you have and then try to treat it a little bit better than you have in the past. If you take better care of your body, you will feel better



and perform better at all that you do.

Keep in mind that a well-thought-out resolution can be a useful tool to help you live your life the best way possible, starting from the inside.

Additional Resource

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports—Physical Activity and The Stages of Motivational Readiness for Change Model:
www.fitness.gov/Reading_Room/Digests/march2003digest.pdf

If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at www.acefitness.org/GetFit and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts™



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