

Of Interest

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It's About Those New Year Resolutions....

by Liz Ashe

A New Year seems to carry the burden of making New Year resolutions, many of which go like this:

For the new year I will....

Well, I think I will.....

I really do intend to try.....

I tried, honest I did....

Well, after all, I'm only human....

Maybe next year!!

Resolutions start out with best intentions and often end up as only a promise after all. Why is that?

Most resolutions are made because we logically know and want what is best for our health, relationships, body, mind, spirit and careers. Listed below are examples of resolutions that each of us, our friends and or family have made. For the new year I will:

stop biting my nails	stop smoking
stop drinking	stop eating chocolate
increase time with family	go on a diet
exercise every day	up-grade my job skills
go back to school	organize my life
follow a budget	fix the marriage
eat low fat meals	
set boundaries between work and play	

All of these resolutions make logical sense. **But all are about change and change is difficult.** Making changes is not a small matter, it takes a lot of effort and determination.

With every change, there is a loss or giving-up. If you stop smoking, you lose the nicotine; if you diet, you give up food you love; if you stick to a budget, you may have to give up some recreational "toys"; if you eat low fat, you lose the double cheeseburgers, fries and milk shake; if you organize your life, you give up the protection of procrastination and excuses. **People don't like loss.**

Change also means giving up a habit. Experts say it takes 21 days or more of conscious effort, willpower and determination to begin to change habits that we've developed over a lifetime. It isn't easy to do. It is easier to continue with an old habit than to change.

So even though our resolutions make logical sense, they create some degree of pain, difficulty, giving up, or stress. The gain from the change isn't always immediately apparent, and soon the resolution doesn't seem worth the effort.

continued

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When is the challenge of change taken seriously? It varies from individual to individual. Some people never choose change, while some are determined to keep the resolutions they make. Still others may need the motivation of adversity, hitting rock bottom, fear, or the threat of death. For example, the heart attack victim decides to eat right and exercise; the fear of job loss makes people learn new skills; hitting rock bottom often leads the drinker to sobriety; a high cholesterol leads to a low fat menu and calls from creditors spark people to watch their spending.

There are other people, who make an attempt to change or alter their life habits, but give up. It just seems too difficult. But this isn't news. We live it or see it in ourselves and loved ones from year to year. Is there a simple solution to changing or sticking to resolutions that are clearly beneficial to our health and well being?

I'd be rich if I could bottle that magic. There is no easy answer. **Each individual has to want to change and must decide the personal gain is worth the effort and/or the pain.** I'll share two techniques I find useful when trying to change a habit.

First, break monumental goals into smaller, more manageable ones and assign a deadline or time frame. For example: I will reduce my smoking to one pack per day (or 1/2 pack) by the end of the month; I will exercise every Monday for three weeks; I will lose ten pounds by April 30th.

Secondly, I list my gains from the new behavior and compare to them to the loses or excuses.

REASONS NOT TO EAT LOW FAT

I love cheese and ice cream
I don't like reading labels
I'm not a creative cook
I prefer my old ways of eating
I hate reading labels

REASONS TO EAT LOW FAT

I have a moderately high cholesterol
I want to live a long life
I want my child to have good habits
I want to lose weight
Heart attacks run in my family

I then try to find substitutes for, or challenge the excuses in the left column (thus reducing them), while increasing the positives in the right column. My self-talk might be "low fat, frozen yogurt or ice-cream isn't that bad. I can limit my cheese, buy prepared low fat meals, and concentrate only on fat grams. I can do this because the left column has only excuses for no change; the right side, has powerful reasons for the change."

Remember lifestyle changes can be stressful and the success or failure depends on each of us. We will accomplish whatever goals we sincerely and realistically establish and commit to. But change can demand a lot more from us than we realize. If we know what we are up against, set workable goals, and look at the real benefit of change, we have a better chance of keeping our resolutions.

Facing Changes?

If you are facing changes and would like to talk with someone, your EAP Counselor can help. Your EAP is a confidential, assessment, short-term counseling and referral program for you and your family members. It is a free benefit provided by your organization. To contact the EAP counselor nearest you, consult your company brochure, posters or call 1-800-769-9819.

If you are having problems,
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