

Living Fit: New Year Resolution

Last Years Rerun or Something New?

Every January millions of Americans resolve to make changes. Some are last year's left overs – some brand new. "I'm going to quit smoking, drinking or over-eating."

"I'm going to get in shape, work on my marriage or finish my degree this year!"

As we plow through January our thoughts chip away at our resolve: "*Wow, I thought I'd be seeing some results by now.*"

We make it to February (*maybe*), things go along pretty well; we take our walks and go to our work-outs (*mostly*); stay away from our cigarettes (well *mostly*); cork the bottle after one glass (aw, come ON); or stride past the cookie isle at the grocery store (well, at least creep past).

Then, slowly but surely we lose our RESOLVE. We skip that walk or miss our work-out, just this once; we're only going to have just one cigarette or glass of wine today; or the cookies creep back into the pantry (of course they're the low fat kind). Suddenly, we're right back where we started. No. That's not really true is it? We're worse off than before, because now we're beating ourselves up over how weak we are. Not only are we back to over eating, smoking, or drinking, we add guilt to the list! Sound familiar?

Why do we do it year after year, making those cursed "new year's resolutions?" Is it the hope of changing into some fantasy of ourselves we see in our minds eye? Is it that we imagine ourselves capable of suddenly attaining some superhuman, unattainable goal that we have set? Or, could it be that we have set an attainable goal, but for some reason we just can't stick to it. Interestingly enough the definition of a "new year's resolution" reads like this: "A New Year's resolution is a commitment that an individual makes to a project or a habit, often a lifestyle change that is generally interpreted as advantageous." (From Wikipedia, the free web-based encyclopedia). Commitment is the key word here. It really is a promise that we make to ourselves to reach a specific goal.

I'm all for setting goals. If we don't have somewhere to go, we end up nowhere. But why wait until January? Every day is a

new beginning and a chance to make right choices. That really is what goal setting and commitment is all about – making choices. Our lives are made up of choices, minute by minute, hour by hour. We choose to do good for ourselves and others, or we choose not to. We chose to change or we chose NOT to change. Both are choices.

Let's take a different view of our resolutions — New Year or any other time of the year. Making a resolution is not just about giving up something we do (eating, smoking, couch-potatoing), but rather deciding to do something that helps us feel better, stay healthy, and live longer. We need to focus on what we are gaining, not what we are losing. Rather than "I WANT this donut, or I NEED a cigarette," just think for a minute what we really are saying if we don't make the choice to change: "I WANT to clog my arteries with fat and my blood stream with caustic sugars; or I NEED to damage my lungs, produce premature wrinkles and have brown teeth."

So what can we do to make successful resolutions? Here are some success-proven, "goal setting" ideas that just might help:

Set attainable goals and timelines. Something that you know you can do if you take the time to do it. If you are an ice cream-a-holic eating a bowl a night, do not try to go cold turkey. Set an ultimate (and attainable) goal, say only one bowl of ice cream a week (Saturday). Then set your timeline to get to that goal, let's say in one to two months. Finally, set your interim goals, let's say by reducing the weekly bowl by 1 to 2 days per week. Something you know you can do.

Set a reward for yourself when you reach your goal: New dress (smaller size!). New golf club (better swing!). Special trip (more fun!).

Tell others about your resolution. Ask them for their support.

Prepare a written, VISIBLE goal chart (calendar) that you will see every day. It should include: Your starting date. Your interim and ultimate goals and dates. Space to record the ice cream bowl count on a daily basis. An additional two months to track your success at maintaining your goal.

Brag to your family and friends. Claim your reward!

What's the bottom line on all of this? We know that our lives are about a series of choices. These choices, especially those life-defining choices, can take a toll on our bodies and our lives. We are in a constant state of flux, never remaining the same, but growing stronger or weaker by the moment. It is in the struggle that we become stronger. Choosing to do the hard work to get our bodies, spirits and lives in shape pays off in great ways. This choice prepares us for those struggles we inadvertently wait for in life. Our physical strength will help us recover from injury or illness more quickly. Our emotional well-being, spiritual strength, and our "resolve" will see us through the struggles that come along for all of us.

Every day, as a Personal Fitness Coach at *20 Minutes To Fitness*, I see people making a choice to keep their bodies strong. Most people come to us to save time since the training we offer only takes one, 20 minute workout a week. But they stay for the incredible results. Our clients not only build physical strength, but also their self esteem and confidence. They feel good about themselves and the fact that their RESOLVE is paying off. They made an important, life-changing choice and they stuck to it. If they can do that, just think what will happen with their next resolution.

So, why wait? Be your own best friend. Make those "quality of life" choices you've been intending to make for years. Live your life on purpose and with purpose. You'll be thankful that you did as the years pass easier and leave less of a mark on your smiling, bright-eyed, face.

Sharon McCampbell is a nationally certified Personal Fitness Coach at 20 Minutes to Fitness®, a private high intensity strength training studio located in Lakewood Ranch. Training sessions are by appointment only and are individually supervised by a team of certified personal trainers. Telephone: 941.309.8989. Web site: www.20minutestofitness.com