

Promises, promises

January 2015 Newsletter



Do you make New Year's resolutions? In 2012, Time Magazine printed a list of the resolutions that are most often broken or forgotten. They include: I will... lose weight, quit smoking, learn something new, eat healthier, become debt-free, spend more time with family, travel to new places, stress less, volunteer more and drink less alcohol.

How to make resolutions that stick

If you make resolutions, you surely have good intentions. So avoid disappointment and boost your chances for success. How? By following some simple steps of good goal-setting. Here are just a few:

- **Choose your resolutions wisely.** Avoid promising drastic changes that are probably beyond reach. And don't make resolutions on impulse.

Take your time and ask yourself good questions. Will your resolution continue to be important to you as the year goes on? How will it improve your quality of life? Will you be happier and healthier if you follow through? Resolutions need to have a clear pay-off in order to be worth tackling.

- **Limit the number of resolutions you make.** Make one or two resolutions at most. That way you can celebrate and feel good about your successes instead of feeling bad about failures. You can always add more resolutions later; there's no real magic about making resolutions on January 1!
- **Be honest with yourself.** Are you resolving to change because someone else is pressuring you? If so, it probably won't work. You really have to want it yourself. Change can be hard and you're the only one who can do the work for you.

- **Be realistic.** Want to lose weight? Set a goal of 5 pounds and applaud yourself when you get there. Then go for the next five. Want to start saving more money? Put aside a modest amount from each paycheck. Once you're comfortable doing that, you may increase it since you'll know you can do it! In other words, take it slow.

Set smaller goals so you can enjoy achievement. You can always raise your goals if you find you're exceeding your expectations. That's much more gratifying than quitting because you can't keep up the pace.

- **Get support.** Some things can be too hard to change on your own, especially if they're ingrained habits or behaviors. Luckily, there's lots of support out there.

There are groups that can help you stop or cut down on smoking, eating, spending and drinking. Enlist friends who'll encourage you. Stay away from those who'll tempt you or sabotage your efforts. Also, consider getting professional counseling to guide your change process.

- **Change your mindset, change your life.** Making changes is really about changing how you think. That's hard, so be kind to yourself.

Remember that judging yourself harshly can keep you from moving forward. Congratulating yourself is much better motivation. So, every time you achieve — or come close to achieving — a goal, give yourself a big thumbs up!