

GET FIT & GET HEALTHY

TOPS says focus makes those New Year's resolutions stick

When the calendar turned to January 1, 2010, many of us chose goals for the new year. Patricia M. Amborn, M.S.M., educator, wellness author, and expert for TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), says New Year's resolutions offer a fresh start for those with self-improvement intentions.

"With a resolution, it's a commitment to take care of what you value," Amborn shares. "Start with self-love. If you value yourself, you will make a concerted effort to take care of yourself."

Visualize changes

When forming individual New Year's resolutions, start by visualizing weight-loss success.

To be most effective, she recommends, write resolutions down. "Scientists have proven that when you write something down in the present tense, your brain thinks you've already done it, and believes it. For example, 'I am eating better. I am exercising more. I am getting appropriate rest,'" Amborn explains.

Change, even positive, can be

overwhelming, so start small, she advises. One way to kick off a new resolution might be to assertively state it to your household. Your announcement could be as simple as, "I want to make 2010 a healthy year."

List expectations of how family members can support this goal. Amborn adds, "A week or two later, repeat the statement. Those words sound assertive and represent boundaries and expectations being set."

Develop an action plan

Define core values as you work to set and attain goals.

Amborn says, "One way to define your values is to visualize yourself at the end of your life, thinking of the legacy you want to leave behind. 2010 is a fresh start. Ask yourself: How do I direct myself to build a foundation for my legacy? The action plan has to become specific."

To develop a plan of action, set a weight-loss goal and establish

it as a priority. Recognize obstacles and double resistance to them. Build determination. For example, if pressured to eat tempting, high-calorie treats, say,



"Thanks, but I'm not hungry right now." Visualize saying this in present tense, and rehearse turning down tempting food.

Take concrete steps

Practice new "small picture" habits while keeping a focus on the "big picture," to fuel motivation. Make the following changes that can add up to big improvements by the end of the year.

Place workout gear by the front door to minimize excuses about exercising.

Find a supportive workout buddy who has also resolved to live a healthier lifestyle. Make appointments with each other to exercise.

Maintain a food log and keep track of everything eaten during the day to reflect on your eating habits and assess your diet.

Toss out or give away treats from the holidays that are lingering in the house.

Post a "healthy living" tally on the refrigerator door. List pounds lost, miles walked, inches lost, and other measurable progress. It's a powerful reminder of what's been accomplished and a deterrent to raiding the refrigerator.

In addition, follow these recommendations from Amborn to make your resolutions stick and promote motivation.

Don't mourn the past, when weight was gained. It wastes time to be mired in regrets. Simply start your 2010 action plan.

As weight comes off, look for hidden rewards. Every few pounds will yield health benefits. Confront negative beliefs held by both you and others. Even if we failed in the past, that doesn't necessarily mean we'll fail again. Take responsibility for each day. If you ate too much food, recognize it and move on.

"Remember this is for your benefit. You have to love yourself enough to do it," says Amborn. "It's about the kind of life you want to live in the new year and in the years ahead."

Believe in yourself. Don't be afraid to ask for help. TOPS chapter meetings each week are a treasure trove of support.

Visitors are welcome to attend their first TOPS meeting free. TOPS-Acton meets Mondays at St. Joseph Church, Church St. E. Weigh-in: 6-7 p.m. Meetings follow until 8 p.m. Info: Jacquie, 519-853-1019. TOPS-Georgetown meets Tuesdays at St. Andrew's United Church, 89 Mountainview Rd. S. Weigh-in: 6:30 p.m. Meetings follow at 7:30 p.m.

* Belly Dance

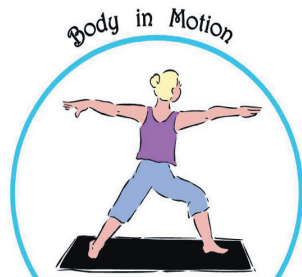
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