



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

10 resolutions to set the stage for better emotional health

1. Take care of yourself. Besides exercising and eating well, what's really important is getting enough sleep. Sleep heals.

2. Learn to relax. Do you realize how little pure relaxation you probably get? When was the last time you gave your mind a break? Or indulged yourself? You don't have to go out of town for a little vacation. Just do things you don't ordinarily do.

3. Laugh. Nothing makes you feel better about yourself or the world around you than a good laugh. It's great medicine, especially if you can learn to laugh at yourself. Laughter heals, too. It's therapeutic.

4. Adopt a philosophy of kindness. Doing things for others is a great tonic when you're feeling down. It's a win-win. Helping others makes you feel included and empowered.

5. Nurture your friendships. In the winter, especially, it's so easy to cocoon and not see people you care about. Make a deal with yourself to see friends you may have neglected. These conversations are good for the soul, not only because you're expressing your feelings, you're listening and being there for someone who may really need you.

6. Stop procrastinating and do it now! Time management is an ongoing challenge for all of us. There's too much to do. Too little time to do it. Procrastination doesn't help. It makes you feel worse. Make realistic daily "to do" lists. Do one thing each day. One thing you've really wanted to do, even if it's only cleaning off your desk. You'll feel a great sense of accomplishment and be encouraged to do more.

7. Try new things. It's easy to do things the same old way, every day, day in and day out. Try something new? It's exciting to learn new things or make little changes in your life. Change is part of life and it can be invigorating. Don't resist change. Embrace it. It's mental and emotional exercise and it's healthy. Good for the brain.

8. Let go of guilt and stop worrying. You can't change the past, so why dwell on it?

9. It's okay to be good enough. Perfectionism can be debilitating. Recognize it, if you tend to be too hard on yourself and lighten up.

10. Ask for help. If you're having emotional problems and you need support, ask for it. Just don't suffer in silence. You don't have to. There's help out there. But you have to ask for it.

Source: Healthzone.ca

For more smoking cessation information, call the Smokers Help Line at 1-877-513-5333 or visit www.smokershelpline.ca on line. For details on the region's quit smoking study, call 905-830-4444, ext 3052.

You say you want a resolution?

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

Whether it's shedding a few pounds, kicking tobacco, getting in shape or whatever will make you happier, New Year resolutions have an average shelf life of about three weeks.

You can improve your chances of succeeding if you set smart goals, York Region health professionals agree.

The operative word, or acronym, is SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.

"I think it is a good time," York Region Community and Health Services nutritionist Nancy Bevilacqua said of New Year's.

"We've got a new slate, but one reason people fall off resolutions is that they don't set realistic goals."

Ms Bevilacqua said resolutions can come to fruition if you follow the smart goal strategy. Setting nebulous objectives can cloud the process.

"Saying you want to eat healthy isn't specific, realistic or timely," she said.

"Making small changes to eating habits will increase your chance of success. You have increase your daily vegetables over the first month, add three fruits as snacks and measure your progress by keeping track."

Small changes are like baby steps, she said.

"If you see a program, promising you'll lose 30 pounds in 30 days, it's not realistic or healthy," she said.

Healthy weight loss is a half to two pounds a week.

"My best advice is to be realistic, know why you want to achieve it and map it out."

Health Services colleague and tobacco program clinical nurse specialist Rosemary Lamont said the New Year is ripe for smoking cessation resolutions.

"Absolutely," she said. "It's a time of transition

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Carly Riding
Newmarket GoodLife Fitness Club general manager

when you look at the year ahead and, besides, it's cold outside."

Working with community partners, the region offers several free stop smoking programs. The first part of the year usually witnesses more motivated participants.

"The (smoking cessation) process can take three to seven attempts before people are successful," Ms Lamont said. "Every quit attempt is good because you can learn from each."

As with all self-improvement, you have to be motivated.

"You have to be ready to quit," she said. "The key is to make a plan, make a quit date and circle it on the calendar. Look at why and when you smoke and identify the triggers. Once you know that, change your environment and routines."

"Smoking is a physical, behavioral and social addiction. It helps to have positive support, not nagging."

Newmarket GoodLife Fitness Club general manager Carly Riding is familiar with New Year resolutions.

"Big time," she said. "Research shows that 90 per cent of Canadians make lifestyle change decisions in the New Year. We see a 30 per cent increase in membership in the New Year."

If your goal is getting fit, slimmer, healthier or more defined, go slow and steady, Ms Riding said.

"Don't try and do too much, saying you'll work out five times a week," she said. "It takes 21 days for something to become a habit. If you fail within 21 days, the resolution fails too."

"The secret is to do something you enjoy. We help tailor an enjoyable setting and workout program for you."

Seneca College psychology and sociology professor Cindy Chisvin advocates positive personal change but isn't a fan of the timing.

"Everyone sees the New Year as an opportunity for a fresh start and is caught up in the idea of celebration," the Thornhill resident said.

"Is it wise? Not really. It's a time dictated by the calendar and hype."

"Resolutions are goals for improving one's life, be it a better job, relationship or health. Early January may not be a good time for you to start. What you really need to do is pick a time of year for your choosing."

She is, however, a supporter of the smart goal concept.

"If you set goals too high you can be overwhelmed and you're setting yourself up for failure," said Ms Chisvin, who has also have a private family practice.

"If you fail, you'll abandon the goal. Keep things realistic, make things tangible and reward yourself along the way."

Changing habits and behavior is essential, she said.

"Start small and try and make your resolution specific, not vague," she said. "It helps to write it down because then it's more realistic and it can be monitored."

She also suggests a support network or family and friends who can encourage the process.

Slips and slides are to be expected with resolutions, the experts say. Learning from errors is part of the path.

"It can definitely be done," Ms Lamont said. "Resolutions can be successful. Just take them one day at a time."

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