

How to Make Your New Year's Resolutions Last **By Debi Silber, MS, RD, WHC The Mojo Coach®**

What's your New Year's Resolution? Is it to lose weight, begin an exercise program, stress less or spend more time with friends and family? If you're like most of us, a healthy body and mind are goals you may want to work towards this year. Actually, these are probably goals you may have wanted to work towards last year as well as the year before. So here's a question. Why is it that we start the New Year off with the best of intentions just to lose momentum within the first few weeks?

One reason is because almost ninety percent of what we do each day is the result of ritualistic habit. From the way we start our day to the choices we make throughout the day we barely need to think at all. For example, have you ever driven home, parked your car and wondered how you got there? As you take the key out of the ignition, you realize that you paid absolutely no attention to the drive at all. Think of the way you get dressed. Don't you always put the same leg in your pants first, put your makeup and style your hair the same way as part of your routine? We've done it a certain way for so long, it's deeply ingrained within us, and minimal effort is required to get the job done. To test this, just start your day with a different routine and you'll see how different it feels!

There's an old saying that goes, "If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you've always gotten." That means that unless we shake things up and try another approach, we're looking at another year of...more of the same.

Let's start with your eating habits. The way we eat, the reasons why we eat, the food choices we make are all habits, which have been formed over time. Some of those habits may have led to an unhealthy relationship with food where we're eating to combat boredom, fatigue, anger, sadness or loneliness. For some of us the portion sizes we take, or how full we feel when we leave the table are habits we've formed as well. For others, we may be in the habit of snacking while watching TV, eating off of our family's plates or finishing everything on our plate...whether we're hungry for it or not.

Next, let's look at other habits like the way you handle your stress, how you schedule your day and the time you leave (or don't leave) for friends, family, relaxation and fun. Chances are, your days are routinely scheduled with chores, tasks, responsibilities and commitments leaving little time for things that bring you joy, passion and purpose. You're taking care of all of the "shoulds" while leaving little time to take care of the "wants." These routines, which lead to the way we've structured our days and our lifestyles may or may not be working for us. So if they're not working, if

they're keeping us stressed, overcommitted, overwhelmed and unhappy...why do we stay with them?

Again, we often stay with these behaviors because they're so familiar. They may not serve us well but because they're part of our routines we forget to take a look at them to see if they no longer serve us. Without an awareness of what we're doing, the routine stays in place and the behavior continues. So, what can you do if you want to finally make a New Year's Resolution that lasts?

The first plan of action involves taking a look at your habits and behaviors. Take a good look at what you're doing, see if it's working for you or not and based on what you find, determine what needs to change. The more you understand what and why you do what you do, the better position you're in to change what doesn't work.

Once you've identified where the problem is, the next step is to make one simple gradual change. Anything drastic is always temporary so it's best to start small. One change headed in the right direction will make a much greater impact than a complete overhaul, which lasts only a short period of time.

For example, when taking a look at your eating habits, let's say you realize that portion control is a challenge for you. Based on that, making the decision to leave over a few bites every time you eat dinner may not seem so difficult. Believe it or not, those few bites each night over time add up and you'll slowly replace your larger portion with a portion that's more moderate. This type of change is likely to last because it's a minor change that doesn't require too much effort and is easy to incorporate into your eating plan.

When trying to cut back on your stress or reconnect with family and friends, maybe another routine you can develop is writing it into your calendar to call a few friends at the start of each week or schedule a "date night" with your partner every Friday night. Sure it may not feel easy at first but over time, these ideas will become a part of your new, healthy lifestyle. With these slow, simple changes you're also slowly replacing old destructive habits with new healthy habits. No change is so drastic that it becomes too difficult to continue so there's no reason to revert back to your old ways. Before you know it, you have a series of new healthy habits in place, which have firmly replaced the old ones that don't work for you.

This New Year, the only resolution you need to make is to stop making the same frustrating resolutions that you've made in the past. This year, commit to making new healthy habits slowly, steadily and...finally.



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