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YOUR GUIDE TO A GREAT YEAR



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How to Handle Change

By Lisa Bendall

The easiest part of any resolution is making one. Sticking with it is another story. Change doesn't come easy for most of us. Follow these tips to make it easier to stay on track and keep your resolutions through the year.

Setting smaller, short-term goals makes them more achievable—and you more successful.

1. Set yourself up for success
2. Maximize your exercise
3. Keeping your New Year's resolutions

It's easy to set your sights on a major lifestyle change, like dieting or quitting smoking. But it's not always so simple to stick with it. "Habits are ingrained," says Ian Newby-Clark, a professor of psychology at Ontario's University of Guelph. "People expect quick and easy change, and when it doesn't happen it can be discouraging." Knowing how to handle the stumbling blocks that come up will help steer you toward success.

Plan ahead

Do a little Internet or library research to learn about healthy eating, so you won't reach for the wrong snacks. If the change means incorporating a new behaviour, like exercising, bank on a time of day when you won't be tired or stressed.

Be specific

Exactly how much weight do you want to lose? Over how many weeks? If you aren't specific, it's going to be harder to make gains. Plus you'll fail to recognize your progress. "Instead of focusing on how far you have to go, it's more positive to look at how far you've come," says Montreal psychotherapist Rhonda Rabow.

Take baby steps

"Don't try to go from zero to five times at the gym per week," says Newby-Clark. You're only setting yourself up for a flop. Smaller, short-term goals are more achievable. Try going once a week, and build from there.

Beef up your resources

Factor in the time and money that's needed for the change, like the cost of a fitness club membership or the hour it takes to work out. "If you're going to add something to your plate, you may have to take something else off," notes Norma Reid, a life coach on Vancouver Island.

Make substitutions

If the change means taking something away, like a smoke break when you're tense, don't leave a vacuum. Plan what you'll put in its place. "What are you going to do next time you're in a stressful situation, instead of reaching for a cigarette or cake?" says Rabow. "Maybe you're going to do some deep breathing, or walk around the block."

Forgive your slips

Face it, you *are* going to stumble sometimes. So when you do have that doughnut or miss that morning run, go easy on yourself. "People feel they have to do it right all the time, and then when they have a little slip, they feel they've failed," says Reid. Learn from your mistake instead, and move on.