



New Year's Issue

HEALTHY LIVING

New Year's Resolutions: How to Make Them & Keep Them

We would all like to believe that the resolutions that we make on the first day of the year have longevity. We would also like to believe that we have the resilience to see them through, no matter how long that might take.

But the truth is that, while close to three-quarters of Canadians make New Year's resolutions each year, only 19 percent of people see them through to completion. In fact, according to *GDSourcing*, in 2011 there was a staggering 52 percent drop-off after the first month, and a really undisciplined 19 percent that gave up within 24 hours of making their resolutions.

So what is a determined resolution-maker to do in world where they seem to be destined to fail? *Forbes Magazine* has a fail-safe solution: just remember to **STOP**.

1. Keep it Simple

Many people think that New Year's resolutions have to be these grand, yearlong commitments designed to completely overhaul their lives. In reality, it is scale of resolutions that mar your chances of

success. When resolutions are too ambitious, they can be so psychologically daunting that they are never even attempted.

Instead, according to psychologist Lynn Bufka, it is much better to set «small, attainable goals throughout the year, rather than a singular, overwhelming goal». So instead of resolving to lose «x» number of pounds overall in 2014, set a weight loss goal at the beginning of each month and work from there.

Top 10 New Year's Resolutions

1. Lose weight
2. Stop smoking
3. Stick to a budget
4. Save more money
5. Find a better job
6. Become more organized
7. Exercise more
8. Be more patient at work/with others
9. Eat better
10. Become a better person



Source: Toronto Star

TRG
GROUP BENEFITS

2. Make it **Tangible**

According to *Harris/Decima*, 63 percent of Canadians resolved to «save more money» in 2012. But what does that really mean? If someone saved nothing in the year before, saving even \$1 during the year would technically be considered a success. That is why resolutions also have to be clear, concise, and achievable.

A better resolution for those wanting to «save to more money» would be to set an explicit dollar amount aside from each pay cheque to be put into a savings account. Just as vague goals equal vague successes, concrete goals equal concrete successes.

3. Be **Obvious**

Let's face it: most of us make resolutions in our heads and they end up staying there. That way, no one knows whether we have accomplished them or not – and the only guilt we have to face is self-imposed.

The real check of whether a resolution can stand the test of time is if we take substantial real-world steps to not only attain them, but also to share them with others. In this case, peer pressure works, whether it is family and friends enforcing your accountability, or involving the general public through social media, blogging, or other online platforms.

4. Endure and **Persevere**

Year after year, the number one reason that people cite for failing at their New Year's resolutions is a lack of discipline. If they only had a little more self-discipline, they say, they would have succeeded.

However, according to Chris Berdick, a science journalist for the *Los Angeles Times*, willpower is variable, and you only have as much willpower as you believe you do. Therefore, the more confidence you have in seeing your resolutions through to the end, the more likely you will succeed.

HEALTHY MIND



Beating Back the Winter Blues

The holidays have come and gone, the sky is bleak, and you yearn for just a bit of sunshine to brighten up the grey landscape. Welcome to the winter blues.

Almost everyone is affected by changes in the weather, but for a small portion of the population, it can be unbearable, manifesting in drastic symptoms akin to depression and bipolar disorder. Research has shown that Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) affects 2 to 3 percent of the general population in Canada, while another 15 percent experience a less severe form that referred to as the «winter blues».

According to the *Canadian Mental Health Association*, SAD is diagnosed when the following symptoms occur for at least 2 consecutive winters, «without any other explanation for the changes in mood and behavior», and disappear in the spring:

- change in appetite, particularly a craving for sweet or starchy food, and weight gain
- decreased energy, fatigue, and a tendency to oversleep
- difficulty concentrating and irritability
- avoidance of social situations
- feelings of anxiety and despair

While it may only last a few months, SAD is just as debilitating in that short time as its more prevalent cousin, depression. Luckily, there are a number of treatment options for SAD, including the first-line of defense: light therapy.

Light therapy, otherwise known as phototherapy, uses a specialized light box that mimics outdoor light and positively affects brain chemicals linked to mood. If successful, the treatment starts working within 2 to 4 days and causes little to no side effects. Medication and psychotherapy have also been used to treat SAD should light therapy fail to produce the desired result.

There are also a number of lifestyle changes that you can make to help you alleviate the winter blues and milder cases of SAD including: making your environment brighter both through sunlight and artificial light, spending more time outdoors during the day, taking a vacation to a sun-soaked destination, and exercising.

The weather outside might be frightful, but with the right combination of treatments and changes, Seasonal Affective Disorder does not have to be.

HEALTHY HEART

The Family That Gets Healthy Together, Stays Together

Family dinners can be the height of gluttony during the holiday season. From grandma's famous fruit bread and cookies to dad's sumptuous stuffing, often there is nary a vegetable or non-baked fruit in sight.

According to the *Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada*, one of the major risk factors for coronary artery disease is family history of heart disease, which not only ties into genetics, but also a predisposition for sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy eating habits.



But what if we turned the idea of family eating on its head...for the better? According to a new study from the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, families of heart disease patients that received counselling as part of their family member's treatment protocol, became more physically active and started incorporating healthier options like vegetables into their diets.

The counselling included «how to improve cholesterol levels, physical activity, [and] fruit and vegetable consumption», and while there was no discernable change in the overall ratio of total cholesterol to HDL cholesterol in family members, there was a decrease in both their body mass index and waist circumference.

Researchers believe that the collaborative approach to the program, including «goal setting, self-monitoring, frequent contact with health educators, [and] feedback», helped motivate the participants more than just providing them with reading material, which could be ignored or forgotten. It seems that support systems are important in whatever we do!