

New Year Resolutions - Help!!!

So just a few days after making big promises to yourself, you are fighting to keep your New Year resolutions.

Alright, before you call yourself a complete failure and salve your dieting incapacity in a tub of ice cream, a few personal health coaches who help individuals choose healthier behaviours every day of the year, want to share some of their expert tips for keeping ten common New Year's resolutions.

It is important to make goals and resolutions as "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Rewarding, Timely) as possible. They encourage setting a broad goal and then developing realistic action steps that can be used to achieve that goal. The health coaches also recommend keeping the original motivation behind the goal in mind, and ensuring a support system is in place if needed.

Following are ten common healthful resolutions--and helpful, practical ideas to make them "smarter":

- **Start working out.** Make the action steps of your resolution more specific, like "I will walk on the treadmill for 30 minutes, three to four times a week," or "I will wear a pedometer to work, park farther from the door and take the stairs instead of the elevator to get in more steps per day."

- **Lose weight:** Make your goal more achievable and timely, like "I will lose five pounds by the end of the month." Then come up with action steps involving nutritional changes, exercise, etc.

- **Eat better:** Change your thinking from "I'm going on a diet" to "I'm making lifestyle changes to improve my eating habits." Consider keeping a food journal to find specific areas you can change. Specific action steps to take might include "I will limit eating sweets to twice per week," or "I will reduce my consumption of fast food."

- **Quit smoking:** Set a realistic quit date. Make sure you are not setting yourself up for failure by trying to quit during an especially stressful time. If you're a heavy smoker, talk to your doctor and consider using nicotine replacement therapy such as nicotine patches, gum or medications. Clear your home of all smoking-related paraphernalia. Also, think about a plan to deal with cravings and challenging situations.

- **Reduce stress:** Identify and write down your stressors. Identify positive steps you can take when feeling stressed and what sources of support you have. A realistic action step might be something like "During times of stress, I will practice deep breathing techniques, write in a journal, or go for a walk to clear my head."

- **Give up fast food:** It is not always possible for some people to give up all fast food, so begin by familiarising yourself with the healthier options on fast food menus. Try using restaurants' Websites to look up nutrition information, or pick up nutrition pamphlets inside restaurants. Work toward planning ahead and packing nutritious meals to take with you.

- **Stop drinking soda:** It may not be realistic to cut out all soda from your diet at once. Think about ways to decrease

the amount of soda you are drinking. For example, try substitutions like flavored water, unsweetened tea or green tea. An example of a measurable action step to set might be “I will decrease the number of sodas I drink from one per day to two per week.”

• Drink more water: Ask yourself how you can increase your water intake. Set realistic, specific steps you can take, like “I will replace calorie-laden beverages with water or flavored water.”

• Get more sleep: Think about ways you can reach this goal. Set a specific bedtime, and stick to a consistent schedule to get your body adjusted. Families with children can especially benefit from having a consistent routine for getting to bed at the same time each night.

• Cut back on alcohol: Quantify how much alcohol you are drinking now. Decide what might be a realistic amount to cut back to. For example, if you typically go out on the weekend and drink six or eight beers, limiting yourself to two beers might be your goal. Identify supportive people (or join a support group) that can help you keep your resolution. Source: marketwatch.com