Choose a SMART Resolution!



For many of us, the New Year is the perfect time to start improving our lives by, exercising more, quitting smoking, becoming vegetarian, volunteering, or other resolutions. Unfortunately, 80 percent of us will fail by February.

Resolutions are hard to keep at any time of the year if they involve unrealistic or vague goals. To be successful, we need a SMART approach.

Being SMART

The SMART approach refers to goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**imely. For example, applying the SMART approach to one the most popular New Year's resolutions – losing weight – would look like this:

- **Specific** – It's not enough to say you will lose weight. You need to be specific: "I will lose 25 pounds."
- **Measurable** – Now you've set a specific goal, you need a way to measure your progress as you move toward a larger goal. For example, "I will weigh myself once a week."
- **Attainable** – Can you achieve this goal? Setting a goal of losing 15 pounds a month is not only unrealistic but unhealthy -- and will result in you giving up or getting frustrated when the scale does not cooperate. Aim for an attainable goal of two to four pounds a month.
- **Relevant** – How is your resolution relevant to your life? Your answer may be "Type 2 diabetes runs in my family. Losing 25 pounds will reduce my risks of developing this disease."
- **Timely** – Give yourself a time frame for your goal. Do you aim to lose 25 over six months? A year?

So your **SMART** New Year's weight loss resolution would be, "Because I want to reduce my risk of developing type 2 diabetes, I will lose two pounds a month for the next 12 months. I will weigh myself once a week to measure my progress."

- **Focus on one thing at a time.** Don't set yourself up for frustration and failure with too many resolutions. Concentrate on your number one priority. The rest will come in time.
- **Take small steps.** Make a step-by-step plan. For example, instead of becoming overwhelmed by the prospect of losing a large amount of weight, take it five pounds at a time. Taking small steps will help you stay focussed and on track – and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- **Reward yourself for small success.** Don't wait until your goal is reached to give yourself a pat on the back. If your New Year's resolution is to lose 25 pounds in 12 months, reward yourself when you reach the five, 10, 15 and 20 pound marks.
- **Be kind to yourself.** You're only human and things will happen – holidays, family celebrations, weddings and social events – that will temporarily derail you. Learn from the situation, shrug it off and focus on tomorrow.
- **Create a support system.** It's easier to go to the gym on a regular basis if you have someone waiting there for you or lose weight when the whole family is eating healthier.

For more information, resources and support to help you achieve your resolutions, contact your Employee Assistance Program.