Make your New Year's resolutions work for you

The type of resolution we set for ourselves is a good indication of where we want to see changes in our lives. But too often, we're enthusiastic about making that change in the first few weeks of a new year, and then the resolve fades away. If you're serious about wanting to make positive changes, you can be successful.



Here are some guidelines that may help:

Be realistic. Before you set your goals, think about whether they are really achievable, and what small steps can be put into place to make them more achievable. Be clear about what you want to gain out of sticking to the resolution: Is it a permanent lifestyle change? A temporary modification? A new attitude or approach?

Be flexible. Rather than giving up on your resolution and then being disappointed with yourself, consider making some adjustments that will help you modify your resolution and stick to it. For example, consider another method of quitting smoking if cold turkey's not working for you; arrange to go to the gym with a friend instead of alone; start your quest again February 1 or 15 after more planning.

Prepare for roadblocks. Think hard about what may get in your way of success, then plan on how you'll overcome those challenges. You may not be able to anticipate all the roadblocks, so also be prepared to note them as they come up and give them some thought at a later time. Don't feel you need to respond immediately and successfully to all roadblocks. Take it slowly. Change is a process.

Get help. There is such a great deal of information and support available today that it just doesn't make sense to try to "go it alone." Pick up a book, check out a website, sign up for a course, join a support group, make an appointment for counselling, ask a friend to help. Your chances of success are increased dramatically when you seek out the kind of help you're most comfortable with. When we connect with others, or acquire knowledge through others, we're strengthened, and so is our resolve.

Listen. Listen to your body, your thoughts, your instincts, your dreams. In a fast-paced world, it's easy to lose touch with ourselves and our motivations. Take the time to experience how you're feeling, how you're reacting to people, places and things. If it's painful to alter your ways or to give something up, what does the pain mean for you? How can it help you know yourself better? Very often, those who have emerged through a difficult time (overcoming an addiction, changing old behaviours) not only feel great pride and a sense of accomplishment, but feel the experience has made them more confident, secure and content.

For more information on specific resolutions, like quitting smoking, search this library for the specific terms that interest you.

By choosing appropriate, achievable resolutions and goals and then reaching out for the support needed to make your plan a reality, you'll be in a great position to see you resolutions come to fruition. By taking stock of what makes you happy, and engaging in physical activities and creative pursuits, you'll be well on your way to an enjoyable winter, and to making this the best year yet.