



By
Nik Nikam, M.D.

How many times have you made a resolution to get in shape, lose weight, quit smoking, drinking, or cursing? Did you ever sit back and consider that there is a common denominator in all these desires—a behavioral change. It is easier said than done. This does not happen over a weekend or even over a year until it happens in your mind first.

Begin with the end in mind—goal, vision, or mission

When you make a New Year's resolution, you have taken the first step, made your goal or the vision that you want to achieve. This is a positive approach to, "Begin with your end in mind," as Steven Covey puts it. You should have written down goals. Put them in bold letters and display that in a prominent place in the kitchen where your family can remind you of your commitment to satisfy their demands (it was your spouse who insisted that you lose weight or quit smoking in the first place, is it not?). That brings us to another important point—are you doing it for your own good or you just trying to get someone off your back. If it is not coming your heart and mind, you will have a hard time sustaining

New Year's Resolution: Get Fit and Healthy!

your efforts in the long run. So, even if someone else initiates the threat, you want to make it your own mission to reach the goal, even if that external demand fades away. You owe it to yourself.

When it comes to health related issues such as losing weight, quitting smoking, drinking, or cursing; you need more than just a determination that you want to do it. First, you have to create a road map, just as you would when you begin a new journey. Break your journey into small tasks that you can easily achieve that will lead to your ultimate goal.

Mission road pebbled with stones

It takes an enormous energy to lift a space shuttle off the ground than it takes to land that giant bird. Similarly, you will need an enormous will power and restraint to change your behavior. It will be painful and downright frustrating at the beginning. There will be enough things around you to distract you from your main course. Your friends may say, "You know, you tried that last year. It did not work." Dissociate from people who do not share the same enthusiasm as that of your well wishers. If you are trying to quit smoking, you do not want to be around people who thinks, "It is cool!" or those who offer you a cigarette, because they do not want to share your misery. Yes, it will be tempting to revert to the old habits.

Time stands still

You cannot climb a mountain with one step, even though your initial enthusiasm makes you think otherwise. It takes at least three weeks to replace a bad habit with a new good habit. Three weeks may seem like three decades. But, if you had your old habits for decades, then these weeks will also come to past, even though it may seem like you are crawling at a snail pace.

Substitutes

You need things to replace the gratification that you were getting with the old habits. For example, have things that can take the place of your nicotine addiction, if you are quitting smoking or non-caloric foods when you are trying to lose a few inches of your belt. Have these in place; since you do not know how soon you are going to be afflicted with the symptoms of withdraw from the old habits.

Associate with the right people

Associate with people who can provide you with the proper tools, knowledge, and most importantly the encouragement to keep you promise until you reach your final destination or that vision you have created in your mind. If you are trying to lose weight, consider joining a weight-watcher group. But, let me be the first one to warn you that just joining a weight watcher group is

not going to make you lose weight any more than sitting in a chicken house is going to make you a chicken. You still need to commit your time, efforts, and do all the other necessary things that you have to do to reach your target. For example, when you are trying to lose weight, stay away from excess foods, restrict your caloric intake, and replace your diet rich in fat and carbohydrates with a diet rich in vegetables and lean meats. Then, start moving, moving with the people with similar goals, and cover a few miles each day to lose some of those extra pounds that you have been carrying around for years. Get rid those tempting deserts and readymade high calorie foods from your kitchen and pantry. You get the picture.

Progress notes

Keep a graphic chart on your refrigerator to remind you when and where you started, what was your target date, how much progress you have made, and how much more you have to go to reach your final destination. If you are not reaching your milestones, determine why you are not on track, and make extra effort to get back on tract. Every inch of progress will serve as booster energy to get you so much closer to your final destination.

Keep on keeping on

It is great, if you can reach your goal of losing ten pound or quitting smoking for a certain

length of time. Understand that human body, muscle, and mind have a tendency to revert back to the old state when there is no constant pressure in the new direction. Take for example, if you continue to play tennis, your muscles involved in the game, get stronger and stronger. When you quit playing, within weeks, you lose the touch and the slick moves. Same thing happens when you quit playing piano for a few weeks. If you want to maintain the new weight level, then continually reinforce the new habits accumulated from the first day when you embarked on the new project.

No deal—no problem

When you try everything and you do not succeed, what do you do? Do not despair. Not everyone can achieve everything they set out to achieve on their first attempt. Reassess your goal and set the bar a little lower the next time. When you can achieve the simpler version of your mission, then you can increase the bar level, just like a high jumper does. The most important thing is to keep on keeping or jumping. One day you will reach your target. After all, another New Year is just around the corner!

Nik

Nik Nikam, M.D.

www.sugarlandheartcenter.com

P: 281-265-7567

nikam@alltel.net