

Tips for Making Change



Getting organized usually makes the list of the “Top 5 New Year’s Resolutions,” but unfortunately all these resolutions for change are said to work only a small amount of the time. In part, this happens because January 1st often isn’t a good time to start to cultivate new behaviors. We are all coming off of the holidays, a time when our routines are irregular – and if anything, the holidays cause us to *backslide* on already established good habits. New Year’s Resolutions don’t work for other reasons as well, ones having to do with unrealistic expectations about how real change happens.

If you are motivated, however, any time is a good time to commit yourself to making positive changes in your life. **Here are some tips to keep in mind when taking on a new “resolution” or goal:**

- **Make sure you are ready for this change and that it is something you are motivated to do** in a deep way. Your goals must be meaningful to you and congruent with your values.
- **Know that change is hard**, and that old habits can be hard to break.
- **Have a good plan and be serious about it:**
 - Write the plan down.
 - Focus on one thing, rather than several.
 - Pick the smallest approximation of your goal to start with – a “bite-sized” one.
 - Make sure your goal, and steps along the way are realistic, measurable, and specific.
 - Post the plan (or a word or image that symbolizes your goal) in different places in your environment.
 - Know that you may have to say “no” to other things to accomplish your goal – what would those things be?
- **Expect resistance and steps backward and know how you will handle them**
 - Accept that failure and recovery are a normal part of the process for most people.
 - Beware of dysfunctional thinking that perpetuates old behaviors. Create new thought patterns that support your progress.
- **Get support:**
 - Tell people about your goal.
 - Have an accountability buddy.
- **Slow and steady is the best way to go** – perhaps make this a year long process with five minutes a day dedicated to this change.
- **Reward yourself** for each small success, and have fun!