

# The strength to change

**The key to keeping resolutions is being specific and sensible, experts say**

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The beginning of each January is an all-out rush at the health club.

People have vowed to shed their extra holiday pounds — and then some.

They've made it a New Year's Resolution, and most of them ultimately fail.

"People usually start to slide off around mid-March," said Patty Mayo-Katsion, a certified personal trainer at LifeTime Fitness in Warrenville.

People make resolutions for the new year for various reasons, some by choice and others by necessity.

A woman with a heart condition could vow to eat better.

A man whose marriage is on the rocks vows to be a more attentive husband and father.

The key to reaching goals is to make them realistic and reasonable, experts say.

People need plenty of support from loved ones and peers along the way and should realize the key to following their resolution is that it's a change for the better.

Phoebe Van Ham, a life coach for the Center for Therapeutic Interaction in Wheaton, said the new year is a natural time for making resolutions.

"A lot of times, people feel a sense of 'I want to start setting a goal,' " Van Ham said. "Being prepared for changes is one way people can set realistic goals. People often try to make too many changes at once or try to take too many steps at one time."

If a man came to Mayo-Katsion on Jan. 1 with the goal of losing 20 pounds in four weeks, she probably would tell him to count on eight pounds, max.

She said trainers go by the American College of Sports Medicine guidelines of one to two pounds per week as safe weight loss.

Mayo-Katsion also would recommended weight training to compliment cardio workouts. Resistance training helps build muscle and increases metabolism, which helps take off weight and keep it off.

But most importantly, people need to make exercise part of their routine to the point where they will feel something is missing if they don't work out, she said.

"It really is a lifestyle change. It's a motivational thing," Mayo-Katsion said. "The longer you do it, the more it becomes part of your life."

Pat Mellinger, a registered nurse and smoking cessation specialist at Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield, said people looking to quit need to gradually eliminate things that trigger a cigarette urge.

Some examples are trashing all ashtrays or banning smoking in the house.

"That way, everything doesn't happen on the same day," Mellinger said.

Then, write a list of five things to think of or do when a cigarette craving arises, such as walking around, taking deep breathes, popping some Nicotine gum or even doing the dishes immediately after dinner to quash the need for a post meal smoke.

"Nothing works for everybody," said Mellinger, an ex-smoker. "They have to think it through first. Most smokers don't successfully stop the first time out. They quit many times."

Mellinger said dumping cigarettes is one of biggest changes people can make. Reminding one's self of the benefits — increased health, monetary savings and better efficiency at work — is a key step.

"They probably know of all the changes they need to make, this is probably the most important one," she said.

Barry Zweibel, life coach and president of the Northbrook-based GottaGettaCoach! Inc., said there are three keys to making change easier.

- Think "Because I want it" as opposed to "What's in it for me" and focus on change, not perfection.

- Realize these are changes in behavior, and focus on specific tasks rather than a general

outcome.

- Develop a support system other than a spouse or friend. It can be an acquaintance or coach for a better assessment.

Finally, don't undermine your accomplishments with counterproductive celebrations. One example is booking an expensive vacation for getting out of debt.

"It's all about choice and being conscious and purposeful in what we choose to do and who we choose to be," Zweibel said.

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