

Ask *the* Expert

New Year! New You!

It's that time again. Along with all this hustle and bustle came New Year's resolutions.

Auld Lang Syne evokes regret, reflection and sentiment for the year ending and anticipation of the new approaching. We assess the good and bad of the previous year and declare our intent to make the new year a better one.

Resolutions are different for everyone. Some vow to do better at work, spend more time with family, take up a new hobby, or check another off their bucket list. However, almost everyone resolves to exercise more, lose weight and become healthier.

In 2014, lose weight was the #1 New Year's resolution and staying fit and healthy was the 5th most popular.

Of all the New Year's resolutions made, less than half last past the first 6 months and a mere 39% are actually accomplished.

Here are ten tips to help you be more successful in 2015.

1. Do not set such lofty goals. Start with small steps. Begin by walking daily and increasing your

time or distance over weeks and even months. When you have accomplished this goal, set another. Small achievable goals are much easier to reach than big ones.

2. No expiration date. By telling yourself you want to lose 40 pounds this year, you will do whatever it takes to get the 40 pounds off and then most likely, you will quit. This will lead to setbacks, weight regain and disappointment. Instead, decide you are going to eat healthier and become more active. Again, set small achievable goals toward this and you will find that while you were trying to lose weight, you actually developed a lifestyle modification.

3. Have a plan. Whether it's to improve your personal finances, get organized or lose weight, you need to develop a well orchestrated plan. Do not be afraid to seek advice if necessary. Keep a calendar and set dates to achieve the small goals. As you work through your plan of action, you gain confidence and education. And, by focusing on the task at hand instead of the big picture, you avoid overwhelming yourself. When we feel overwhelmed, we are more likely to ditch the project all together.

4. Do not set unrealistic goals. Some of us were not made to weigh 120 pounds.

And, others were not cut out to run a marathon. Set goals that you can physically achieve. It may be getting into a size 10 or running 2 miles a day. The key is to remember it is your goal and no one else's. Do not compare yourself to others. Be your own competition. The goal should be to improve you, not out do someone else.

5. Eliminate stress in your life that can impede in your resolution. Do a self assessment and identify areas that cause you undue stress and can be eliminated. If your resolution is to stop smoking, then avoid situations where you are enticed to smoke. Avoid the foods or drinks that you associate with smoking. Join a support group or seek counseling. Reserve time for quiet reflection, yoga, meditation or prayer. Most fall off the wagon when life's worries become too much and they must rely on old habits.

6. It is not about willpower. By telling yourself you need to muster the willpower to accomplish your goals, you ultimately set yourself up for failure. Instead of willpower, make it about habits. If you want to become more fit and healthy this new year, then tell yourself you will exercise 3 days a week. If we treat our brain like a muscle, it will become accustomed to the daily or weekly habits we set and will eventually

incorporate those into our normal routine. Its more about perseverance than willpower.

7. Do not set multiple goals. Often this is just too overwhelming. Instead, pick the resolution that is most important. If you are able to focus all your energy on just one goal, you are more likely to accomplish it.

8. Accountability is key. That means more than just writing your New Year's resolution down on a piece of paper that will be lost. Post it in plain site (refrigerator, your computer screen, dash of vehicle or bulletin board). Tell someone else or join a group that shares your same resolution.

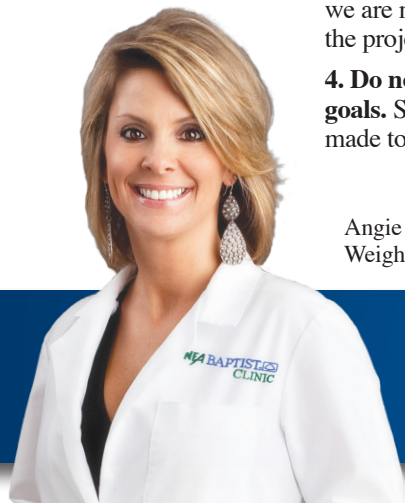
9. Do not be afraid to seek help from counselors, health care providers, health coaches or trainers. Seek expert advice for the things you find difficult to conquer. Often it is what you don't know that is holding you back. Find the professional that can help.

10. Get Motivated!

Let your New Year's resolution be about getting better. Do not set resolutions that only add to your stress, worry or anxiety. Keep it simple, take baby steps and remember it is about developing habits not willpower!

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Get Better.