

1. LIST YOUR RESOLUTIONS, BUT ALSO YOUR MOTIVATIONS:

Having your resolutions written down in a place where you will see them on a regular basis will serve as a reminder and reinforcer for you. However, sometimes we get so caught up in what we are doing that we forget why; so also make a list of what your motivations are so that when your list of resolutions is not enough, you will have another source of inspiration. Tape it to your bathroom mirror, your front door, your refrigerator, or anywhere where you will see it on a regular basis.

2. SET MORE MINI-GOALS:

Break your resolutions down into specific, measurable mini-goals. These should be things you can accomplish within a day or week at most. If you want to cut back on foods high in sugar and fat, rather than say you will never eat a dessert again, maybe tell yourself you will go without it for the day. Mentally, you are more likely to commit to a goal if you know it will be over within 24 hours. Then, at the end of the day, you can decide if you want to set that goal again for tomorrow. Not only will your resolution seem more manageable, but you will feel a sense of accomplishment every time you meet your daily goals.

3. FOCUS ON THE HERE AND NOW:

While it is great to resolve to increase your physical activity or improve your nutrition to achieve long-term benefits such as weight loss or improved overall health, research indicates you are more likely to stay motivated to stick to those resolutions if you focus more on the present.

In a study based on 385 women, researchers from the University of Michigan found that those who focused on short-term benefits exercised more often than those who looked at long-term benefits. This was true even when the women indicated they valued the long- and short-term benefits equally. So if you want to convince yourself to fit a workout into your busy schedule, think about the immediate benefits of exercising, such as stress reduction, improved mood, and increased energy to help give you the motivation you need.

See article at Web page: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_120788.html

4. PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN:

Executing a plan is easier if you lay the proper groundwork. Even little obstacles can derail your resolutions. Always lay out everything you will need for your workout the night before: clothing, shoes, water bottle, music players, etc. Make sure you purchase enough active-wear that you won't have to constantly do laundry to have an outfit for working out.

If you made a goal to eat healthier, plan weekly menus so you can get all your grocery shopping done at once. Prepare as much as possible in advance - especially snacks. Fresh fruits and

vegetables make great snacks, but they can require some prep time. Make it easier for yourself to choose these healthy options by washing and bagging them at the beginning of the week, so each day you can just grab a snack bag and go.

5. REMEMBER THAT "EVERY DAY" MIGHT BE BETTER THAN "SOME DAYS":

In her book, *The Happiness Project*, author Gretchen Rubin writes about how she discovered that it was usually easier to do something every day than it was to simply do it on some days. Although it may seem counter-intuitive that doing something more often would make it less difficult, this technique can help you keep the momentum you need to succeed.

6. VARIATION IS KEY:

Although doing something every day can serve as motivation, lack of variation can destroy it. Prevent boredom in physical activity by trying new activities on a regular basis. To get some ideas, check out the President's Challenge Activities list!

See list at Web page:

<https://www.presidentschallenge.org/challenge/activities.shtml>

When it comes to adding variety to your diet, MyPlate.gov is a great nutritional resource. Browse their Food Groups page to come up with new fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods and dairy products you can incorporate into your snacks and meals.

Visit their Web page at:

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/>

7. RECORD YOUR PROGRESS:

You've heard it before, but we'll tell you again: record your progress! When trying to change a behavior, finding a way to track your progress serves as a very effective tool for holding yourself accountable. Both the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award and the Presidential Champions offer online tracking tools for recording your physical activity (and nutrition for PALA+).

Visit their Web page at: <https://www.presidentschallenge.org/challenge/champions/index.shtml>

8. REWARD YOURSELF:

Give yourself some positive reinforcement! The famous psychologist B.F. Skinner asserted that, based on his experiments, rewards are more effective at changing behavior than punishment.

While living up to your resolutions might be enough of a reward, planning other incentives will give you something tangible to work toward. Whether you take a mini-vacation, purchase some new workout music, or pick out something from the President's Challenge Shop, find a reward that works for you.

Visit the President's Challenge Shop at Web page:
<https://www.presidentschallenge.org/shop/category.php?cat=1>

9. STAY HYDRATED:

The human body is composed of up to 60 percent water.

Visit USGS.gov at:

<http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/propertyyou.html>

Water plays an essential role in the functioning of your cells, so maintaining hydration is very important. Additionally, in a study published in the Journal of Nutrition, researchers found that even mild dehydration could negatively impact mood, cause headaches, and increase the perceived difficulty of tasks.

See study at Web page:

<http://jn.nutrition.org/content/early/2011/12/20/jn.111.142000.abstract>

Bear in mind that if you are increasing your engagement in physical activity, water loss through sweat can become a concern. However, over-hydrating can also negatively impact your body by causing an electrolyte imbalance. Check out the recommendations from the American College of Sports and Medicine (ACSM) to learn about how to safely and effectively stay hydrated when exercising AT Web page:

<http://www.acsm.org/docs/brochures/selecting-and-effectively-using-hydration-for-fitness.pdf>

10. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: GIVE YOURSELF A DISTRACTION:

With the wide range of physical activities available, you should be able to find at least one that you enjoy. However, when looking to increase our daily activity levels, we usually turn to activities that don't require equipment, like walking or jogging, or those that you can participate in at a gym, such as stationary cycling or weight lifting. While convenient, these activities are not everyone's cup of tea; so introducing distractions you enjoy, like reading, watching your favorite show, or listening to music can help take the "work" out of your workout.

According to an article in the New York Times, listening to music while exercising has been shown to help reduce stress and depression by releasing endorphins. However, it is important you don't allow your distraction to negatively impact your posture or form.

Visit New York Times article at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/18/fashion/18FITNESS.html>

11. NUTRITION: THINK ABOUT FOOD IN TERMS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY EQUIVALENTS, NOT CALORIES:

Read the following two statements: 1) This soda contains 250 calories. 2) It takes 50 minutes of jogging to burn off this soda. Which one leaves a bigger impression? Odds are the second statement meant more to you. In a study published in the American Journal of Public Health,

researchers found that signs stating physical activity equivalents caused sales of sugary beverages to drop by 50 percent.

Visit the National Public Radio (NPR) new article at Web page:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2011/12/16/143790349/exercise-info-not-calorie-counts-helps-teens-drop-sodas>

Although it is commonly understood that calories are energy equivalents, many of us do not know how to translate those energy values into activity equivalents. If we start to equate food with the amount of exercise required to burn it off, it might help us make more appropriate choices about how much to consume.

12. IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY TRY AGAIN:

Ideally, we would all make our New Year's resolutions and then execute them perfectly. But in reality, this is rarely the case. Old habits die hard, and it takes time to adopt new behaviors. So if you fall off your resolution horse, dust yourself off and hop back on. Don't let minor slip-ups serve as an excuse to throw in the towel. Whether you use the President's Challenge or a different strategy of motivation, when it comes to your physical activity and nutrition goals, stick with it to get fit!