

WELLBEING

Avoid the New Year's resolution letdown

BY MAX IZENBERG

"Giving up smoking is easy — I've done it hundreds of times." — Mark Twain

Is 2010 the year that you will become a new, improved, healthier, and perhaps slimmer person? Or will you fall behind in your promises before the end of the first month?

Toward the end of the holiday season, most of us start to think of the steps we will take to improve ourselves — namely, our New Year's resolutions. Even as we are enjoying ourselves, eating all that amazing food and partying into the wee hours, we know that in the back of our minds we must start to think of all the new rules to create a better, healthier somebody. We begin to visualize this new person.

And while we have all the best intentions at the beginning of the New Year, how can we motivate ourselves to keep these promises and recreate ourselves into that better individual?

Here are some tips:

MAKE IT INTERESTING. When all the excitement of the New Year passes, it's easy to get bored with even relatively new routines. If your resolution is to walk more, try walking in different areas so you don't get bored or discouraged — even if you have to drive to a new area. Try listening to

energetic types of music as you walk to keep yourself motivated. Also, set specific goals for yourself as you go along. Is there a 5K walk that you can prep for? Would you like to run in a charity race? These can be your "big picture" goals to help keep you motivated.

REWARD YOURSELF FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR! Little rewards here and there can help keep you on the right track. If your goal is to reach out and re-connect with an old friend or relative, or patch a broken relationship, reward yourself for taking a small step, whether it's looking up the person's phone number or asking your friends for contact information. A reward like new stationary may not only motivate you to keep moving forward, but will also have the added bonus of helping you actually achieve your goal — to reach out and rekindle that relationship.

SHARE IT WITH OTHERS. A friend who recently gave up smoking told everyone he knew of his decision. He even gave them the actual date so they were able to support him during that period. Sharing your goals with the world helps keep you accountable, and it allows your friends, colleagues and loved ones the opportunity to support you along

the way. Try to find a "goal buddy" to share the same goals with.

DO IT GRADUALLY. If you want to change your eating habits, settle for a steady ongoing course of action, taking one step at a time. Even if it's a small step at first, you'll eventually reach your goal. Let's say your goal is to eat healthier meals so you can lose weight and feel more energetic. Your daily breakfast consists of bacon and eggs, so replace it with oatmeal and fresh fruit, just two or three times a week. Pretty soon you'll notice a difference in how you feel and also in your weight. These small improvements will keep you motivated to stay on track!

MAKE GOALS THAT WILL WORK. So, you've finally decided to write that book. Congratulations! It's a dream that many people have but few accomplish because it can be so challenging. However, if you set aside one or two nights a week to work on that first chapter, you won't have to burn the midnight oil in order to get the other chapters moving along. If your goal is something like "I want lose weight," it will be much harder to stay on track than if you said something more specific like, "I will lose five pounds by the end of January." That becomes a doable goal.

