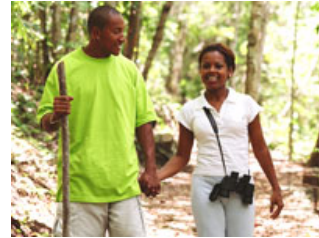


Create a Healthy Lifestyle You Can Keep

by John Mehrmann



New Year Resolutions are full of great intentions, great aspirations and great enthusiasm. Some resolutions are much more difficult to keep than others. Typically these resolutions are statements of ultimate purpose. Personal promises are made to lose weight, complete a monumental task, spend more time with the family or live a more healthy lifestyle. Plans and aggressive schedules are hastily cobbled together to attain our lofty goals, occasionally fueled by champagne and high spirits. The biggest challenge comes later, with 364 more days to fulfill the promises and commitments made on New Years Eve.

Commitments to take control of our lives are often sparked by some special occasion or change in season. Preparing for summer, facing ourselves in the mirror with a bathing suit and pale complexion, that is enough to ignite a temporary transformation. Preparing for a family gathering, a wedding or a school reunion can also be cause for personal reflection and prompt attention to our appearance and our lifestyle. You do not have to wait for a new year, a change in the seasons or a celebration to take control of your life. **Taking control of your life can be a daily celebration, a renewable resolution and as gradual as the change in the seasons.**

By focusing on the goal, and not on the process, sometimes we try to do too much at once. For example, joining a fitness club on Friday and deciding to work out one hour every day may seem like a great plan during the weekend, and then suddenly seem like a great burden by Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Losing 30 pounds can lose it's excitement once the first 10 pounds are erased and the next 20 pounds become a struggle. Sudden changes in eating habits can impact your level of energy, your emotions and your attitude. Drastic changes may be difficult to sustain, even after the goals are attained.



Creating a healthy lifestyle means adjusting your daily routine. If you can repeat something for 30 days, it becomes part of your routine and part of your lifestyle. You can adjust your lifestyle gradually over time, achieving your goals in a manner that can be sustained and maintained. For example, maybe you want to be able to run a mile or two every day. Start by walking for ten minutes at approximately the same time every morning or every evening. If you can maintain this commitment for one month, then you can extend it to twenty minutes another month, and then later to thirty minutes. After several months, you will be able to adjust your time, five minutes jogging and fifteen minutes walking, and so on. By the time that you are running for one or two miles, you will have established a comfortable routine, and you will have continuously improved your healthy lifestyle during the course of the preparation.

Creating a healthy lifestyle might also include controlling or decreasing unwanted or unfavorable habits. For example, you might have a desire to change your routine by decreasing consumption of alcohol or tobacco. You might want to limit your intake of salt, soda or sweets. Rather than punishing yourself with a starvation diet, you might begin by making a commitment to limit your 'fast food' consumption to three times per week. If you can maintain that lifestyle for one or two months, then you might reduce it to two days per week, or even one day. **The secrets to success are consistency and realistic goals with personal commitment and tracking.**



Begin by making a list of things that you want to do and a list of things that you want to reduce. **Don't try to do everything at once.** Rather, choose one thing that you would like to do, determine a reasonable portion of it to start with, and do that for one month. Remember, you are not going to start by running a mile on the first day, so **choose a portion of your goal that you can turn into a daily commitment. Focus on your commitment, track, and keep your daily routine for one month.** Then, the following month, continue to keep that routine while you begin to do something from the list of things that you want to reduce. Keep up the pace as you alternate months, adding good habits and slowly reducing the unwanted ones.

Don't worry that you are not changing everything overnight. By taking time to control your routines, change your habits and create a healthy lifestyle, you are making more permanent improvements to your life. Rapid changes with overnight improvements can sometimes result in rapid changes back to the unwanted habits. However, if you can make a continuous commitment, no matter how seemingly small or insignificant at the time, maintaining long term changes can have long lasting results.



It's time to create your healthy lifestyle. You can start right away. Now is the best time to start. Make a list of positive improvements in small and manageable steps. Make a list of things that you would like to control, decrease or slowly give up. Choose your first new habit, track it for a month and make it your new routine. Keep that habit as you begin to work on the next one the following month. It's your life, and you have plenty of time to turn it into the lifestyle that you want to live.

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Words of Wisdom

"Exercise alone provides psychological and physical benefits. However, if you also adopt a strategy that engages your mind while you exercise, you can get a whole host of psychological benefits fairly quickly."
- James Rippe MD

"I still need more healthy rest in order to work at my best. My health is the main capital I have and I want to administer it intelligently."

- Earnest Hemingway

"Taking control of your life can be a daily celebration, a renewable resolution and as gradual as the change in the seasons."

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