

## Positive Goal Setting for Your Health

Aaaaaah, January first. It holds such hope, such promise. This is the year you will change your life, get healthy, feel good, and get your self confidence back. Did you tell yourself that last year? Did it work?

If you're like most Americans you *did* tell yourself that and it *did not* work. People start the year off with the best of intentions, maybe even a plan. Usually by the end of the first week a "mess up" is made, all of those hopes and plans are dashed. Negative talk is tossed around: "I just can't stick to a diet", "I wasn't meant to be healthy", "I'll always be fat" and my favorite "I'm just big-boned, it's useless!" Then you give up. This is the year you are not going to give up. You are going to try again as many times as it takes.

You are meant to be healthy, you can "stick to" anything you decide to, and trust me, you are probably not big-boned. A little shift in your thinking needs to occur before you can be successful. Getting healthy is not black and white. If you don't do exactly what you set out to do one day, guess what? You have another day coming up where you can try again. It is like a gift you can give to yourself. Not only do you get a second chance, you get a third, a fourth and a fifth. Take as many as you need. Use these tips to help you get started on a healthier path this year. Live to have no regrets. Do you really want to be making these same goals next year at this time? Or do you want to be looking back at the year and thinking "Good for me! Look at what I accomplished. I wasn't perfect, but every day I tried again. I never gave up."

1. Start small. Baby steps. You may be great at goal setting but it's the follow-through that is killing you. You make a wonderful goal but then the hugeness of it may be too overwhelming to even consider. There are easy ways to make those goals more user-friendly. Let's look at an example:

If your goal is to lose 50 pounds by the end of the year, break it down into smaller, more reasonable goals. An easy way to do that is to write out your main goal, in this case lose 50 pounds by the end of the year. Then break it down into monthly goals. Let's see, 50 pounds divided by 12 months is 4.166 pounds per month. Let's round that down to 4 pounds per month. There are approximately 4 weeks in a month. I'll do the math for you. You now have a weekly goal of losing 1 pound a week. Losing 1 pound is a little easier to deal with than losing 50, in my book. So, you have a weekly goal, now what?

2. Set daily goals. I like to set my goals the night before. That way I go to bed thinking about what I'm going to accomplish the next day. It takes me about five minutes. I write them down in my journal. I keep them simple, no more than four or five of my goals revolve around fitness and nutrition and I've been doing this awhile. You will start with one or two. Don't go thinking you are the exception and can do 10 goals because you are so amazing and committed. You will start with one or two.

3. Keep a journal. Write down your long term, short term and daily goals. Your daily goals are what will help you to achieve the short term goals. Write down your nutrition, if this is a part of your goal. Write down water intake, vegetable intake, fruit intake. Write down everything that is important in reaching your daily, short term and long term goal. If you feel like you messed up, write that down too. It will come in handy later on when you reread your journal to see what works for you and what doesn't.
4. Don't be hard on yourself. Like I said earlier, if you fail, tomorrow is another day. With that said, that is not a good reason to give up on today. If you have a meal that wasn't part of your plan, then make sure the next one is. Do not feel like your whole day is blown. Maybe you just have to take it one meal at a time, rather than one day at a time.
5. Feel free to snack if you're hungry. What should your snack be? Probably not something from the vending machine at work or something you can ask for out of a clown's mouth. Vegetables, people! Fruit or some sort of whole grain item is a good idea as well.

Good luck to you. Don't let another year go by where you could have felt better, physically and mentally. You can do this. Let me know how it goes.

*Shelley Donohue is a certified Nutrition Consultant and personal trainer. She is currently available for email consultations at [shelleyd1@comcast.net](mailto:shelleyd1@comcast.net)*