

New Year's Resolution: Get Healthy! Lose Weight!

Do you drag the same New Year's resolution out of the closet every year? "Get Healthy! Lose Weight!" THIS is the year you will finally do it! You renew your membership to the gym, sign up for the newest diet plan and buy a Super Combination Blender/Juicer. You start off strong with no cheating on your diet. You diligently march to gym for your Zumba aerobics class. You see some initial results on the scale and celebrate with a new outfit. But as January turns into February, you notice that even though you have been doing everything right, the scale refuses to budge. You buy a new scale. Still nothing. Your energy is not quite what it used to be. You eat your prescribed diet lunch but check your lunch bag to make sure you didn't overlook anything. The break room at work gets harder to avoid, and you find yourself succumbing to the brownies that your skinny coworkers bring. You find yourself saying, "Well, I blew it for today, might as well get pizza tonight." You'll start fresh tomorrow. Over time, the days you spend "on the diet" are fewer and farther between, and the days "off the diet" become the norm. Finally, you abandon your New Year's resolution where it sits collecting dust with your Bowflex and your Nordic track. The Juicer stays in the kitchen. You've discovered it makes the perfect chocolate malt.

If you're like the rest of us, you blame yourself for failing to lose weight, even though the vast majority of all diet plans fail to produce significant, permanent weight loss. If your juicer did not operate 95% of the time that you pressed "on", would you attribute it to your own poor motivation? No, you would throw out the juicer and move on. If diets haven't worked for you, maybe it is time to throw out the diet and move on.

2011 New Year's resolution: Get Healthy! Forget about Losing Weight!

Eating nutritiously and being fit are important components for good health. But did you know you can improve your health by doing both, *even if you never lose weight*? When weight loss is your primary motivation for eating well and exercising, you are likely to give up on these behaviors when you don't see the weight loss results you want - losing all the great health benefits your body was experiencing.

Furthermore, healthy eating and fitness are only small components of what constitutes good overall health. Many others factors contribute to optimal health and most of those factors are more amenable to change than your body weight is. If you are interested in improving your overall health and well-being, try one of these five options for *really* getting healthy in 2011:

New Year's resolution #1: Grow your spirituality. For some that means making time for prayer or church, for others it might mean meditation, contact with nature or even discerning your purpose and meaning in life. If you aren't sure where to start, resolve to forgive someone this year who you think does not necessarily deserve to be forgiven. You might be surprised how good it feels.

New Year's resolution #2: Did you know that people who have supportive, fulfilling relationships are healthier and live longer than those who do not? Make 2011 the year that you improve your romantic relationship, go to marriage counseling or develop more intimate friendships. If none of those options appeal to you, get a pet. Owning or interacting with animals improves your physical and emotional health too.

New Year's resolution #3: The healthy expression of emotions is an important part of overall health. If you have difficulties expressing anger, sadness or other emotions, resolve to improve your skills through self study or seeing a counselor.

New Year's resolution #4: "Laughter is the best medicine." Actually, it really is. People who laugh, are optimistic and make time for rest, pleasure and play end up having better health. Can you think of a more enjoyable New Year's resolution?

New Year's resolution #5: If you really want to think big in 2011, improve your health and well-being by improving the health of others in the world. While middle and upper class Americans are ruminating about losing weight, others are struggling to survive the effects of violence, disease, racism, poverty, poor access to healthcare or just bad luck. Turns out, altruism isn't just good for others; it's good for your health, too.

If you review this list and find that you are doing pretty well in each of the areas, you might think, "Yes, but I am still overweight." If this is true for you, maybe it's time to redefine your notion of health. Forget about the next diet and live your life. Throw out the scale and the unused fitness equipment. Keep the juicer. The perfect chocolate malt is good for the soul.

For more on:

Failure rate of diets:

Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth about your Weight, by Linda Bacon

Health benefits of social support and pets:

Love and Survival: The Scientific Basis for the Healing Power of Intimacy by Dean Ornish

<http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2009/February/feature1.htm>

Health benefits of optimism, humor:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/positive-thinking/SR00009>

Health benefits of altruism:

The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others by Allen Luks and Peggy Payne

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