



Ring in the New Year

This time of year many of us have the tradition of making a New Year's resolution. Often we consider ways we want to improve our lives, we set goals, make plans on how we can accomplish these goals, and we really feel good about our plan. Then reality sinks in. Perhaps we bought those new running shoes, joined a gym, cleared all the junk food out of the house, or bought gallons of paint to spruce up the house. Not only do we fail to reach those goals, but we also feel worse because now not only did we not improve our situation, we now feel like a failure.

Perhaps you may want to improve your situation and have a fresh start for the New Year but you want to avoid the trap of resolutions that are never realized. Here are some options to consider:

- **Consider an Aspiration Instead of a Goal.** Many of us have attended classes where we have learned how to define goals and measure outcomes. We are told that goals should be specific and measurable. This is a great idea but often we forget that the goal also needs to be attainable. So last year if you didn't manage to walk more than a few blocks a week, it's pretty unrealistic to set you New Year's resolution this year to run a half marathon. Does this make you a failure? *Of course not!* There were likely many obstacles that stood in your way that you did not plan for. So what to do this year so that you can be successful?
- **Prioritize what is really important to you and realistic.** You decided you are going to get serious about your health. If you work 10-12 hours a day, have children at home, and drive 30 minutes to work each day, it is unlikely that you will use that gym membership very often. Instead, maybe you could plan a 15 minute walk during a lunch break each workday or even 3 out of 5 days because you know some days you won't even take a break.
- **Be vague, not specific.** Aspirations are different from goals. An aspiration is a hope of achieving something. This takes some of the pressure off. It's a bit vague, fluid, and exactly how you envision it can change over time. In January the gym membership seemed like a good idea but by March a 15 minute walk is still working toward better health.
- **Recommitment instead of resolution.** Look back at the last year's goals and recommit to one that is important to you. Perhaps you made progress toward that goal and now you want to take it a bit further. Or perhaps you didn't accomplish the goal and this year you can redefine it in a more realistic way.
- **Have fun with a resolution.** Resolve to do something that just makes you feel better. Commit to a monthly bubble bath or massage. Enjoy reading a good book. Spend more time watching the hummingbirds at the feeder. Bake cookies for a neighbor. Tell someone you love how much you appreciate them.

