

NEW YEAR - NEW YOU???

SALVAGE THOSE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

This time last week many of us were fervently resolving to lose weight, get out of debt, stop smoking, etc. By now, unfortunately, most of us have already broken those resolutions. The failure results in stress, low self-esteem, self-recrimination, and guilt.

Before you give up those New Year's resolutions completely, STOP and THINK! Like many goals, resolutions fail for two reasons: **unrealistic expectations** and an **unwillingness to change**.

EXPECTATIONS

Gail attended one of my workshops with a resolution to lose fifty pounds - a reasonable and healthy number for her size. However, she unrealistically gave herself only eight weeks to do it, using a self-designed menu filled with deprivations.

As a veteran of a personal battle with fifty pounds, it was clear to me that Gail was setting herself up for failure. I advised her to double or triple her timeframe (it took me nearly a year to take off that many pounds) and create a plan that included daily snacks, an occasional splurge, a drink or two and an exercise plan she could do. Gail adamantly refused because, at that moment, she felt so strongly motivated toward success.

Of course, after only a couple weeks, her enthusiasm gradually dwindled as she fasted from the foods she enjoyed. Then Gail had a seriously stressful week and she took her frustration out in a food binge. It lasted until she weighed more than when she started. She felt defeated, embarrassed, angry and, worst of all, worthless. Her expectations were greater than her reality could accommodate. Though I felt sad for her, it didn't have to be that way.

In my own case, my weight loss was slow and the program long-term. Studies show that consistent effort, and small, incremental losses provide the most lasting results. I joined a group that focused on behavior modification, planned my meals in advance and took it one weigh-in at a time. I used the same realistic process when I stopped smoking. I mentally prepared for weeks and made a list of all the non-health reasons for not smoking. I "practiced" being a non-smoker and gave myself a six month deadline so I could stop gradually. I used a one-hour, one-day at a time method. I kicked the habit and assumed the life of a non-smoker...which leads to the second reason for the failure of New Year's Resolutions.

CHANGE

Last year, after giving a speech based on my book, *Victorious Woman!*, I received a call from Karen. She excitedly told me of her personal quest for victory and asked for help with a business goal. As we talked, I asked Karen how many hours each week she believed she needed to accomplish her objectives. She responded with a realistic expectation of six hours.

However, when I asked where she would find that much time, her obstacles surfaced in the form of volunteer jobs. After we calculated the hours she used for them, we discovered that if she gave up two of them, she could make time for her goal. When I asked which jobs would go, the question stumped her. “None of them,” she answered. Karen was unwilling to change her schedule to make time for achieving a new level of success. She wanted to believe she could magically squeeze another six hours of time and energy out of her already-busy week without giving anything up.

Like many people, Karen wanted to reap the benefits of a life-changing victory without doing anything to change her life. That’s the same thing as wanting something for nothing – and it just doesn’t happen in the real world.

An old adage says that if you always do what you’ve always done, you will continue to get what you’ve already got. If you **want** something different, you have to **do** something different...***you have to be willing to change.***

So, this week, instead of feeling frustrated because you broke your promise, look over your resolution and **revise it**. Avoid the universal temptation to find an instantly gratifying quick-fix and instead look at your expectations and willingness to change. Devise a one-step-at-a-time, one-day-at-a-time mindset to produce the best and most lasting results.

Finally, recognize the key that Karen, Gail and many of us overlook: the most significant benefits of getting that new job, getting out of debt, or starting something new isn’t achieving the goal, but the personal development that occurs in the process.

When I lost fifty pounds, I developed more assertive behaviors and healthier ways to deal with stress. When I stopped smoking, I found new, non-smoking friends. When I wrote *Victorious Woman!*, I got up earlier each day to make time for writing. The changes in my daily lifestyle challenged me – but I am a stronger person than I otherwise would have been.

This year, dream great dreams and make resolutions. Then take your time, plan well, enjoy the journey and be victorious!

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