

NEW YEAR'S FITNESS RESOLUTIONS Success or Failure?

By
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Every new year, millions of motivated, hopeful people resolute to lose weight and get more fit. Every year, over 75% of these resolutions fail. Why?

The reason for this failure rate is that people take on programs that are too rigid, too time-consuming and somewhat uncomfortable, often times painful. Why do people take on programs like this? Because they are in a hurry to get quick results. Many people have the will power to take on a “quick results” type of fitness program and many of these people will be successful, at first, because they managed to suffer for two or three months to reach their goal, but what do you think happens to these people after their goal is reached or after they have toughed it out for three months? The answer is that, most of the time, these people are so sick of the strict regimen they have been following that they stop doing it and gradually go back to their old ways that made them overweight in the first place.

So, what is the solution? The key to successful weight loss and attainment of fitness and good health is to take on exercise and eating habits that are comfortable, enjoyable, energizing and satisfying that don't take up a lot of time and don't require tedious effort. In other words, find a “doable” program that meets your individual needs and goals and stick to it. **Don't get in such a hurry!** Ask yourself how long you have been struggling with your health and fitness. Understand that you have to start out gradually and wean yourself away from your “bad” habits and learn “good” habits that reflect a true lifestyle of fitness. This takes time and patience.

Commit to one year of finding your fitness lifestyle. If you make some reasonable changes in your diet and exercise, you could permanently lose anywhere from 10 – 50 pounds in one year. Work at it consistently and don't let your “setbacks” cause you to quit. Keep focused on your goal, but don't let it overwhelm you. Take the “three steps forward and one step back” approach. Don't go three steps forward and five steps back! In a year's time, you will be successful. Create your own routine and keep experimenting with different strategies. Everyone is different and to follow someone else's plan, just because it worked for them, is only going to be a temporary endeavor. You have to find your own plan that works for you and then make it a lifestyle, not a temporary feat.

Your eating plan should be based on good, balanced nutrition, but more importantly that nutrition should be achieved with foods YOU like to eat, not what someone else tells you to eat. Also, you should eat enough food to sustain and energize you and keep your metabolism up to par. Many people think they have to be on the verge of hunger in

order to lose weight. They also think they have to give up “fun” foods, like ice cream, pizza, burgers and alcoholic drinks in order to be successful. That is just not true. Over eating is the main culprit to weight gain.

Exercise is a must, but you should engage in physical activity that YOU enjoy, that feels good to YOU and that fits into your busy schedule. Optimal and effective workouts, that can reasonably fit into our busy lifestyles, can be achieved in as little as 20-minutes for an aerobic exercise and 30-minutes for a weight training regimen. Many people are under the false impression that they have to exercise for much longer than that to get results, but that is just not true. Consistency, intensity and variety are the key to changing your physique.

So, you need to think about this a little and then find a good personal trainer and/or nutritional consultant to educate you about nutrition and exercise and then help you design a program that works for you. If you interview a personal trainer or nutritionist that isn't asking you what you like to do and don't like to do, get rid of them. A good fitness consultant will help you design a program of eating and exercise that doesn't make you suffer or feel deprived.

Don't let a trainer tell you to run if you hate running. Don't let a nutritionist eliminate ice cream from your diet if ice cream is one of your favorite treats. As far as I'm concerned, if a particular food makes you feel good and makes you happy, then include it in your diet in a reasonable amount. If you have to have your beer, or wine or whatever cocktail you desire, then find out how to include it in your diet in a way that makes it OK to have, not something that will sabotage your diet.

If you follow the guidelines below, you can expect to lose 1 – 2 pounds a week. If you lose weight faster than that, you are on too drastic of a regimen. You will probably end up gaining all the weight back because your body could not adjust and it will fight you all the way. Some simple guidelines to get you started are as follows:

CALORIES IN VERSUS CALORIES OUT: Calories are the bottom line to success in weight loss. You have to use more calories than you eat in order to lose weight. Try to stay within a calorie range that will help you lose weight, but not keep you hungry and feeling deprived. You need to have all the energy you can get to take on an exercise program as well as get through your busy day. If you are tired and struggling every day, then you are not doing the right things.

The average caloric intake for females should be anywhere from 1500 – 2000 calories, depending on your size, activity level and metabolic rate. Male's caloric intake should be anywhere from 2000 – 3500 calories a day, also depending on your size, activity level and metabolic rate. Of course, these caloric ranges do not apply to everyone. Without counting calories, there is a way to know about how many calories you are consuming just by selecting a prescribed amount of servings from each food group. No one wants the tedium of counting calories, but you have to know about how much you are consuming in order to be successful. Yes, just cutting down on how much you eat will

automatically lower your caloric intake. Cutting down on your fat intake will also lower your caloric intake because fat is very high in calories.

SERVINGS FROM ALL FOOD GROUPS: In order to have good nutrition, you need to make sure you eat foods from all food groups in an appropriate ratio. Follow the “Guide to Good Eating” format and you will be on the right track. You can adjust your ratio to meet your personal preferences, but do not eliminate any food group.

Fruits 2-4 servings
Vegetables 3-5 servings
Grains 6-11 servings
Proteins 2-3 servings
Dairy 2-4 servings

The number of servings that you should have depends on your body size and activity level. If you are a small woman or not very physically active, you should have the lower number of servings in each food group. If you are a large person or very active, you should have a higher number of servings from each food group, but try to maintain the prescribed ratio. In addition, try to choose foods with a lower fat content. You don’t have to eat nonfat foods to be successful. Just limit your serving size and number on high fat items like butter, oils, cheeses, etc.

Serving sizes are defined on the Guide to Good Eating. You can get this information from a dietician, nutritionist, personal trainer and other health professionals. The following example will get you started:

Fruits: 1 medium fresh fruit; ½ Cup canned; 6oz. Juice.
Vegetables: ½ C canned or cooked; 1C leafy; 6 oz. Juice.
Grains: 1 bread; 1 oz. Dry cereal; ½ C cooked cereal; ½ C cooked pasta or rice.
Proteins: 2 –3 oz. Meat, Chicken, Fish; 2 Tbs. Peanut Butter; 1 Egg; ½ C Legumes
Dairy: 8 oz. Milk or yogurt; ½ C ice cream; 1-2 oz. Cheese; ½ C Cottage Cheese

EXAMPLE MENU:

The following is the example of a 1700 calorie day:

Breakfast:	1 1/2 C Cheerios	150
	1 C Skim Milk	100
	Coffee w/ 2 tsp. dry cream	20
Snack:	1 Harvest or PR Food Bar	250
	(or Light Myoplex protein drink w/1/2 banana)	
Lunch:	4oz. Turkey	150
	2 Whole Grain Bread	200
	mustard	10
	½ C Fruit Cocktail	100
Snack:	Yogurt	250

Dinner:	4 Oz. Pork Roast	200
	2 Lrg. carrots	50
	1 Sml Potato	100
	2 Tbs. Light Margarine	100

This menu yields 1 Fruit; 3 Vegetables; 4 Grains; 4 Proteins; 2 Dairy
 It contains a good balance of nutrients and is a very “normal” way of eating...not a “diet”, but a “lifestyle”. As you can see, you could easily add 2 beers or glasses of wine OR a piece of dessert for only 200-300 more calories. If you require more calories, then just use this format and increase the portion sizes. This is doable. Twigs and berries are not.

EXERCISE:

Your exercise routine will depend on what you like to do, what you have time to do and what facilities you have access to, but the following is an example of a reasonable program for anyone who desires to improve their cardiovascular and muscular fitness and flexibility, as well as use physical activity to aid in losing weight. The key is to pick activities you like, a setting you like (whether with a group to music or alone in the park), a variety of routines for best results and less boredom, and to work hard when you work.

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
20-30 minutes Treadmill Walk (use the incline to challenge)	Spinning Class	45 minute Outdoor Hike
30 Minute Total Body Weight Training	30 Minute Total Body Weight Training (using different exercises than used on Monday)	Home Toning Video

If you do not have 60 - 75 minutes at a time, such as required on the above three-day-per-week format, then split it out through the week. Do your “aerobic” workout on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and do your weight training or toning workout on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. If you are trying to lose weight, doing something physical six days a week is a better strategy, anyway. If you have extra time on the weekends, go for a long walk or walk/jog or skiing. Try a Pilates or Yoga class or video.

The last thing I want to advise you is that, to be successful in weight loss, you have to incorporate a good diet with a consistent exercise program. If you only exercise and do not watch what you eat, you can expect to gain more strength and endurance, but you may not feel better because you are not eating nutritious foods or perhaps you are still over eating. In addition, your weight loss will be slight, unless you are exercising a lot

more than the above regimen. The key is to eat less than you are now and be more active than you are now. The extent to which you go will depend on you.