

Happy New Year!

Resolutions take lasting commitment

If you are one of the many people who have made the resolution to get into shape or to quit smoking, congratulations! When clients come to me seeking a radical change, we look at all of the influences—past, present and future—that may have an impact on the desired outcome.

Nutrition and exercise are the obvious factors in achieving your fitness goals, but less often considered are the equally important psychological factors such as being sure that you are staying realistic with your goal setting and anticipating responses from others, as well as yourself.

Diets don't work long term, but moderate changes in our diet can have a lasting effect on how we feel. You are less likely to rebel against moderate changes in your diet, like using organic ingredients or less butter or making that fast-food-style burrito at home. Whether or not you want to lose weight, we all have room for improvement when it comes to how we eat. Close your eyes and think back to a time in your life when you felt really good, had energy, etc. and then try to remember how you ate at that time. Do these foods appeal to you now? They are most likely going to have more appeal than something foreign or a restrictive regimen. Try not to equate the time when you felt good and had more energy to how thin you were, especially if you were a party child of the '80s.

Prior to beginning a fitness program, establish a baseline for yourself by defining what "in shape" means to you. Plan how, when and where you'll exercise, and write it out. If you are a beginner at all of this, pursue your exercise goals one week at a



Dear Ethel
BY MARIA CALLAHAN

time, and assess what's working and what isn't working after four weeks. Chart your progress. If weight loss is your goal, put a tighter-fitting pair of pants in a drawer and try them on monthly. Remember that lasting change takes time. Weigh yourself no more than once each week, not daily. Your daily weight naturally fluctuates, and that can be unnecessarily discouraging information. If you want to establish a baseline another way, try using how far you can walk or run right now, before needing to stop and rest. Challenge yourself by going all out and writing down the results. You can assess these types of fitness-based challenges weekly, and if you've got the intensity where it needs to be, you'll see an improvement quickly.

Set goals, and "clear the path." I'm always impressed with clients who choose the less-than-popular goals like becoming more flexible rather than dropping dramatic amounts of weight. I know

from my own experience that it's hard to gain support from friends and family when your goals differ from theirs. My friends thought I was crazy when I started exercising, so I hired a new friend: a personal trainer. If you've ever tried to quit smoking but had a partner or other significant person in your life who smoked, you understand this obstacle.

I spoke to therapist Reid Vanderburgh specifically about loved ones who, knowingly or not, impede our success when we try to change. Vanderburgh, a specialist in gender identity and transgender issues, says: "People often base some portion of their own identity on the identity of others, and this can play out in any transition. For instance, mothers of trans men hate to 'lose' a daughter. They've based part of their own identity on having a daughter. In terms of weight loss, this might apply to a partner who secretly fears their partner will feel more attractive and may leave them. People sometimes try to hold others back from actualizing a dream because it's secretly their dream, too, but they feel unable to take the plunge. They're actually envious."

Prepare for success, not failure. If you've tried getting into shape millions of times before without success, Vanderburgh suggests choosing a different goal, or one that will improve your life no matter what. Getting what you want isn't always as great or easy as it sounds—you might even want to acclimate to achievement and success by experiencing a series of smaller successes in the beginning. Some people even tell of feeling really angry after losing a significant amount of weight. Of this Vanderburgh says:

"Be prepared for the possibility of internal backlash. Try to normalize the types of changes you will experience, because you may experience backlash when you change radically."

He adds: "Remember that all of your problems will not go away spontaneously if you lose weight. We have a cultural ethic to take care of others before we take care of ourselves, when really, the reverse should be true. Remember that the only lifelong relationship we have is with ourselves. Goals are to better yourself, not to please others."

And finally, here's something I do personally: Take one week (mostly) off from heavy physical activity every six weeks or so. If you've suddenly gone from computer programmer into combat paratrooper, you can expect feedback of some sort from your body—hopefully not in the form of an injury. Lying on the couch for a couple of evenings in a row in those instances is not failure; it's a good example of the common sense we all possess. Best of luck! **10**

For more information contact REID VANDERBURGH at 503-341-7001 or www.transtherapist.com or read his book, *Transition and Beyond: Observations on Gender Identity*. Check out www.exercisefriends.com to find an exercise partner.

Information in this column should not be used in place of advice from a licensed health care professional. If you have a health or fitness question, e-mail DEAR ETHEL at mariacallahan@gmail.com or visit www.mariacallahan.net.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

BELLA CASA REALTY, INC. THANKS YOU ALL
FOR A WONDERFUL YEAR.

We take this time to let you know that Celia Lyon left us at the end of the year. We have had a great time working together, but she has chosen to move on.

I AM PLEASED TO WELCOME NIKI ROBINS AS MY NEW BUSINESS PARTNER STARTING THE NEW YEAR. NIKI, AS SOME OF YOU ARE AWARE, IS MY DAUGHTER, AND HAS BEEN LICENSED AS A REALTOR AND WORKING IN OUR OFFICE FOR ABOUT 4 YEARS.

NIKI HAS BEEN A GREAT ASSET TO BELLA CASA REALTY, INC. AND I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THE YOUNGER, FRESHER APPROACH TO THE BUSINESS THAT SHE HAS TO OFFER.

BELLA CASA REALTY, INC. WILL CONTINUE PROVIDING SERVICES TO THE PORTLAND COMMUNITIES WITH PROFESSIONALISM AND PRIDE AS WE HAVE IN THE PAST.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO ASSISTING YOU WITH YOUR REAL ESTATE NEEDS IN 2007. PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL ON US.

WARMEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

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