

3 Strategies to Stick to Your Health Goals

Did you resolve to improve your health, diet and habits at the beginning of the year?

It's now been about seven weeks. How are you doing with them so far?

During the months of January and February, we talked about learning from the past for a more successful year, setting up resolutions that succeed and the most common reasons they fail.

Why?

Resolutions and goals can be hard.

In fact, most reports claim that greater than 80 percent of New Year's resolutions are abandoned by February.

If you're on the brink and feeling defeated, don't quit.

Instead, try these three strategies to stick with your health goals. It's not about the new year; it's about your health journey every day.

3 Strategies to Stick With Your Health Goals

1. Forget motivation and rewire your brain for action.

The Problem with Motivation

If you've been depending on motivation to stick with your health goals, I've got some bad news. Motivation doesn't

really work.

In fact, it will wax and wane and is more of an emotion than a sure-fire tactic.

What's more, it's not the natural state of your brain.

Unless it is faced with immediate danger or gratification, your brain wants to keep your body comfortable. In fact, it works towards homeostasis or the "state of psychological equilibrium obtained when tension or drive has been reduced or eliminated" ().

Your brain will actively work to reduce the stimulation or drive. This includes your challenge to take on a new healthy habit like resisting detrimental foods.

Laser Focus

There's another issue.

Especially if you're trying to make a behavior change that's been difficult for you in the past, a busy brain will have an especially tough time.

The more difficult the task, the more focus and energy is needed for it. The difficulty of a task may mean emotional or psychological difficulty, not necessarily physical. The "difficult" task must become a singular objective at that moment. Due to this demand and effort, a busy brain may further resist the action ("The Neuroscience of Goals and Behavior Change").

Rewire the Brain

The solution? Don't give your brain the chance to think and resist. Bypass the resistance with action, until the action becomes a habit.

In Mel Robbins' teachings on behavior change, she's coined her steps as the "Five-Second Rule." Basically, this philosophy

teaches that you focus in on the one behavior, and you bypass motivation.

In order to do so, when it's time for the action, you count down 5-4-3-2-1 and then do it.

One task, one focus, no time to "change your mind."

For example, let's say you want to start waking up earlier right when your alarm goes off rather than hitting snooze. Once you hear the alarm, you count down 5-4-3-2-1, snap open your eyes and get up.

Don't listen to your brain telling you to stay in bed, laser-focus on only counting down and then acting.

The more you do this, the more your brain will develop new pathways (alarm equals countdown equals out of bed). You'll establish habits that will become your new status quo.

2. Set up negative and positive consequences.

There is another way you can trick your brain: immediate consequences and rewards.

Remember that our brain will fight our "drive" unless there's an immediate danger or immediate gratification? You can create one that's tied to your actions.

Unfortunately, the long-term consequences of an unhealthy lifestyle aren't great motivators. But you can put immediate consequences into practice.

To start, try bets or rewards.

Examples of Immediate Consequences

For example, you can "bet" your child that if you don't wake up when you say you will, you will pay him \$ that day. That's

an immediate consequence to not getting out of bed.

Or, if you do, you will put \$ away for yourself for something you really want (not food). It's important to make this an action: physically put \$ in jar.

The key here is the follow-through and action. You've got to stick to your word.

3. Tell yourself the truth.

In all of this, you can overcome feeling deflated by simply telling yourself the truth about who you are in Christ.

- You are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
- You were beautifully made, and God knows you inside and out (Ps. 139:13-14).
- You are worthy of love and forgiveness, just the way you are, goals or no goals (John 3:16).
- You are strong and can look at any situation with contentment and gratitude (Phil. 4:11-13).
- You are cared for, and even your smallest goals are important to God (Matt. 6:26-30).

Bottom Line

Your health goals are not all or nothing. They are a journey and a part of your walk with God as His creation. You can stick with your health goals.

Set your plan to bypass motivation and form habits, give yourself tangible consequences and rewards, and remember the truth that you are already worthy and loved by God. {eoa}

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