

## The Counselor's Corner

How will we ever keep those New Year resolutions?

On New Year's Eve, there was a Facebook post that said, "365 new days, 365 new chances". What a great new twist on an upcoming calendar year and the opportunities that await us. It can inspire us to spend money on exercise equipment and gym memberships, purchase all kinds of containers to organize our homes, or buy a nice new planner. Unfortunately, the pessimists...maybe just realists....tell us that about 70% of us will fail! So, how can we be part of the minority that will succeed?

First, I think we should pick our own date for a new year, because we hopefully will have 365 days full of surprises and options after our date as we would have had on December 31. Further, we will be ready. We can clean out the "bad" holiday leftover food, and enjoy the delicious taste of it, before we embark on a diet. **I choose January 18.** My birthday is January 7, and I think I will have finished celebrating with my family and friends by the third Monday in January. Regardless of the date, goals cannot be accomplished without a starting point. Choose a date. NOW!

Second, we should choose only 1-3 goals, because any more will probably guarantee failure. Once we pick our goal/s, we have to shy away from generalities. For example, healthy weight loss is good, but **how** are we going to get there? We must work out a long range plan to include the pounds we hope to shed and by what date, as well as work a daily plan that includes specifics. Psychologist Dr. Andrea Bonior suggests saying something like "I'll go to the gym three times each week, take the stairs at work at least twice, and bring a healthy lunch every day." Seems like a great idea, because we have clearly defined smaller steps that we can measure.

To achieve any goal, we have to recognize that it is more complicated than dreaming or wishing. It is full of parts or, as Newby-Clark says, our goals are full of sub-strategies that will "boost the success rate." To achieve our ideal weight, we must shop for healthy foods, cook differently, exercise in a variety of ways, and maybe even change the way we socialize. Students who want to improve their grades must find their sub-strategies. They must focus on a plan for success that includes writing assignments daily in a planner, doing all of one's homework, as well as studying more for tests and seeking the help of a teacher one or more days each week. For those who want to save money, perhaps listing expenses and figuring out what can be cut would be a great start.

Third, we need to admit we are human and most likely will stray from our goals once in a while. Even the pope recently admitted to a youth group that he sometimes gets angry. Pope Francis went on to say that the only true goodness is God. Pope Francis's claim to humanness should encourage us to accept that we are not perfect and certainly not divine. We will make mistakes, but we need to get back on track as fast as we can. Let us simplify our goals, detail our steps to get there, accept our flawed nature, and forgive our transgressions. Only then will we get results in 365 days.

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