



New Year's Resolutions

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Yes, it's that time of year again...New Year's Resolution time!

For some people the thought of making yet another New Year's resolution can bring feelings of anxiety, or even self-doubt and frustration of unmet resolutions in the past.

As a therapist, the things I hear people say they would like to work on are related to their overall health - weight-loss, exercising more, and promises to start eating healthier. Adults make promises to eat less junk food and head to the gym to work out and be showered before the sun has risen. A parent vows to get the whole family eating healthier and exercising more. Realistic? Maybe.

How about scaling it back? Start small. Try branching off of something you already do well. Ask yourself, "what's working about _____ right now, and how can I do more of it?"

Starting out small can also mean looking at things a little differently. Have you ever thought about improving something that is not primarily about your physical health, but related more to your mental health and your well-being by:

Improving an estranged relationship with someone in your life. Maybe a friendship that ended over something that now seems silly or unimportant. Perhaps an ex that you could tie up loose ends with and find some closure. Such strain can weigh on you mentally and physically.

Building a relationship with the neighbors you've never gotten to know. Remember, start small - by saying hi or asking to pet their dog the next time you see them outside. Offer to help them shovel their driveway this winter.

Maybe you have a distant family member you have never truly gotten to know. Start with an email or a card and progress with your efforts to connect throughout the year.

It's important to include self-care and reflection in your resolution but remember to start small.

Finding some relaxation time for yourself almost always sounds easier than it is. A starting off point could be to train yourself to just "chill out" for a bit. Start out with just trying to sit still for 15 minutes without getting up to do anything. I know it is highly unlikely to be able to sit for more than 3 minutes without jumping up to get or do something for you or someone else. Try setting a timer, perhaps on your phone, for just 10 or 15 minutes. Sit without getting up, even if it's just to check Twitter, answer a text, or to help a small child change the dress on their doll or fix a toy.

While you are "chilling out" you may find things around you that you think you'll need to get up for - the floor needing to be vacuumed or the plants needing water. Even though you may notice these things, don't get up. Then over time gradually increase the amount of time you are able to sit still and let your mind just "chill out" for a little rest. Taking a small amount of time to literally allow your brain to relax can benefit you throughout the rest of the day.

With all the choices we make throughout the day it's no wonder that our minds become exhausted. So this year, try not to sweat making gigantic New Year's resolutions that will leave you feeling overwhelmed. "Start out small and let it grow from there".