

The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

They're Not New Year's Resolutions - Just Mini-Goals

from the American Counseling Association

It's New Year's Resolution time, or more accurately, time for setting big life changing goals and then soon discovering you're probably not going to reach them.

Why? Because most of us tend to think too big. Stop smoking...lose weight...make it to the gym more often. While these are all good goals to aim for, achieving success can be difficult since that often means major life changes. It's fairly easy to say "I want to give up cigarettes," or "I'm going to drop 30 pounds this year," but actually making those things happen requires some drastic and difficult changes in the life we've gotten used to living.

The result, as we bump into those difficult changes, or as we perhaps drift back a bit after making progress toward our goal, is that we become discouraged and just give up on what we're trying to achieve.

The answer to the problem is actually quite simple -- don't try and bite off too much at once. While that final goal, say of losing those 30 pounds, may be what you want to achieve, it's something that's going to take a long time to reach. And, let's be honest, most of us aren't very patient people. We want to see results as soon as possible!

So how to make that happen? Set smaller goals. For weight loss, for example, forget about the final goal and set small goals that you know you can achieve. Maybe it's just to lose 4 pounds in the next month. Eat a bit healthier, don't obsess about jumping on that scale every ten minutes, increase your exercise a bit, and at the end of the month you'll probably have hit that mini-goal. When it happens, reward yourself. No, not with a celebratory ice cream sundae, but with something that makes you feel good about what you've achieved, and that will help motivate you to set another mini-goal towards your final target.

Regardless of the resolution, setting mini-goals is the best way to get you moving. Achievable goals provide positive feedback and help you reach your final destination. And if you do happen to fall really short along the way, just accept that we're all human and we all stumble now and then. Reexamine those goals and what changes you need to make. Start small, give it another try and pretty soon you will be closer to that final goal.

*“Counseling Corner” is provided by the American Counseling Association.
Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at
www.counseling.org.*

###

words: 400