

OLDER AND WISER: Let's resolve to make manageable new year's resolutions

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file photo Cindy Goodman, North Shore News

At this time of year many of us make resolutions in order to kick-start some changes in our lives.

Like many of us, though, we assume these resolutions will be easy to fulfil if we just buckle down, exercise more control and never waver. However, while resolutions are a good way to get us on the road to change, they are not always easy to achieve.

The best advice I've encountered is to make resolutions which are doable and realistic.

Two years ago, my resolutions were quite extensive and included one big one – putting my end of life affairs such as power of attorney, will and representation agreement in order, a very important resolution, but also, a broad one – which should have been my only resolution as it took all year to achieve because of the complexity of the goals.

Exercising and losing weight are two major resolutions people make at this time of year. But often people unrealistically decide to go for maximum weight loss and an exercise program which is not workable. Before starting a weight-loss program consider how much is a healthy weight for yourself, how do you measure your weight and what eating plan may work for you.

Most advice for older adults suggests eating a healthy diet and avoiding empty calories, adding more protein and of course getting more exercise. Try not changing your diet drastically but making a few healthy changes like adding a few more vegetables and fruits.

Many people start the year by signing up for a gym membership. Unfortunately, attendance often goes by the wayside after a short while. Instead, you could opt for walking (mall walking in the rainy weather is great), or an exercise program at your nearest seniors centre or community recreation centre where specialized exercise classes for an older person are available. Many centres offer osteofit, dance, yoga, balance, movement and, for the fitter among us, Zumba. Check out Parkgate, North Shore Neighbourhood House, Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre and West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. I hear the Keep Well exercise classes that are held across the North Shore are fun and also quite social. For a list of classes phone North Shore Keep Well at 604- 988-7115. Of all the positive effects associated with physical activity, one major one is that exercise programs have been found to reduce the risk of falls, the No. 1 cause of accidents among seniors.

If your goal this year is to engage your mind more, there are loads of things you can do such as reading, crossword puzzles or solitaire or Sudoku. You also might consider going to a class that teaches you how to use your tablet or smartphone to play games.

If you have resolved to be more social, remember socialization is the key to healthy aging and it's a great way to give your brain a boost. So, explore social opportunities in your area such as joining a club, attending seniors' centres and recreation centres. You could also take a community education class or check out North Shore Elder College which provides discussion groups, day trips, lectures and guest speakers. And a great way to socialize is to volunteer. Most organizations have volunteer opportunities, and in addition to the social benefits of volunteering, you'll feel good about yourself as well.

Happy new year everyone and thanks for reading this column – maybe resolve to read it every time it comes out.

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