

OLDER AND WISER: Let's strive for new year's resolutions that are actually doable.

Making resolutions can inspire us to set some goals for the new year which can promote healthy changes in our lives.

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Cindy Goodman, North Shore News

You may have already made some resolutions for 2021, but I must admit I was loath to do so since I am not sure what this year will look like.

That said, I am feeling optimistic given the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine. In any case, even during the pandemic, I believe that many of the resolutions we make are worthwhile.

Making resolutions can inspire us to set some goals for the new year which can promote healthy changes in our lives. Making resolutions can make a difference to our outlook on life by letting us enter the new year with an upbeat and positive attitude. A positive attitude can contribute to healthy outcomes for seniors.

My usual resolutions, and probably for millions of others, are to lose some weight, get more physical exercise, kick bad habits and give my brain a workout – all healthy ways to start the new year. But it has been a struggle for many seniors to achieve those goals last year. The pandemic brought lock downs with less ability to get out of the house and the closure of our regular places to congregate and exercise. Out of boredom, we may have taken up some bad habits such as more drinking and excessive TV watching.

Staying at home brought on a surge in cooking, especially baking, and it seems that many put on COVID-19 pounds. The pandemic has led to stress eating, snacking out of boredom, challenges finding healthy food, and more time spent being sedentary.

An online survey of 1,516 Canadians by Leger and the Association of Canadian Studies found that one-third of respondents had gained weight. The weight gain was often attributed to anxiety, which in addition to snacking and stress eating, may have caused people to turn to comfort food – not always a healthy choice.

Of course, in the pandemic, eating well may be hard. Instead of baking or turning to comfort food try investing your time in discovering and trying out new healthy recipes. Get back to healthy snacking – break out the veggies and fruit nibbles with perhaps a healthy new dip. Make sure your plates are filled with whole grains, seafood, lean meats and poultry, beans, nuts, and seeds. Consuming less sugary drinks, desserts, white bread and pasta made from refined grains are also good strategies.

Getting exercise has also been a challenge during COVID-19, but as we know exercise is an important part of healthy aging. Try exercising at home using some of the virtual platforms available. I know getting onto a computer and the internet can be challenging, but if you can, give it a try. I heard from a person who is hosting an online exercise class that a couple who are 90 have been attending a virtual Keep Well class. I bought an exercise bike and have found it a great way to get my exercise when the weather is unpleasant.

Some exercise classes are available on DVD so check with the library to see what is on offer. You could try getting outside for walks and maybe if you feel safe try walking around the mall in the inclement weather. I for one am looking forward to some sunny (or at least less rainy) days ahead.

Challenging our brains at this time can be difficult, but it's worth the effort. Try dusting off some board games or loading some games onto your computer. 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.

If you have, like many others, started drinking more alcohol – try cutting back. According to the Mayo Clinic Health System website, "People may choose to drink for many reasons, but overall motives tend to fall into two main categories: enhance positive feelings or suppress negative feelings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both motives can play a role in drinking more than usual."

Excessive drinking can make you feel depressed, increase your chances of falling, cause trouble sleeping, interact with your medications, and can contribute to other health problems. Try cutting back and taking on more active pursuits like exercise or a hobby.

Remember to make all your resolutions doable and achievable. Happy new year and let's hope COVID-19 is going to be behind us this year.

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Ideas for future columns are welcome. Email lions_view@telus.net