



Old Habits and New Beginnings

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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At the start of the new year, people often make decisions to get rid of old habits and implement positive change into their lives. Sometimes they might attempt to quit smoking, lose weight or even try spending less in order to save more than they did in the past.

Gym membership sales soar and the registrations for health-based programs usually increase significantly at the beginning of January. Unfortunately, by February you usually don't have to fight the crowds for exercise equipment and you can pretty well pick which group you would like to enroll in as the dropout rates are high.

If you are truly serious about making positive changes in your life there are several things that you can do to ward off discouragement and ensure that you get good results.

1. Make sure that it is your idea to make the change. It isn't very often that we are motivated by the goals that other people have for us. Just because your partner thinks that you would do better if you were a few pounds lighter doesn't mean that you will have the desire to do what it takes to follow through.
2. Set goals that have a reasonable time commitment for achievement. Saying that you plan to save several thousand dollars in a few weeks might not be at all attainable. You are better to have a longer timeline and lower expectations.
3. Make sure that you have the tools that you need to help you. To quit smoking "cold turkey" for example is a very difficult challenge for people who have had the habit for some time. Enroll in a program or ask your physician to help you review and choose the best options to help you.
4. Give yourself instant feedback for small accomplishments rather than waiting for bigger results. For example, treating yourself for losing five pounds will be more motivating than waiting until you have lost twenty pounds to acknowledge your success. Remember, success breeds success!
5. Find a supportive environment. It is always wise to have positive individuals in your life who will encourage you in your pursuits, but particularly when you are stretching in order to reach goals. A few kind words will go a long way to reinforce new behaviours. And an attitude of forgiveness from someone else will remind you not to be too hard on yourself for a slip.

It is good to have new goals, make plans and begin a positive adventure at the start of each New Year. But it is also important to remember that we all are human and need to be gently and wisely moved towards the finish line in order to enjoy long-term success!

Best wishes as you begin 2011 and this time of new opportunities!