

How to keep your weight-loss resolutions real

January 4 2013, by Raquel Maurier



Arya Sharma, professor with the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry and chair of obesity research and management at UAlberta, says making small, sustainable lifestyle changes can help people keep their New Year's resolutions to lose weight and get more exercise. Credit: www.drsharma.ca

With the start of a new year, many of us make resolutions to lose weight and exercise more often. But why don't our New Year's resolutions have staying power?

"The first reason is a lot of these [resolutions](#) tend to be unrealistic," says Arya Sharma, a professor with the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry and chair of obesity research and management at the University of Alberta.

"A lot of resolutions tend to add things onto our already busy schedules, which rarely make any resolutions sustainable. One of the secrets about weight management is trying to live healthier by making lifestyle changes that are sustainable.

"Think about people wanting to get up an hour earlier to go exercise: they can do it for a few days, but unless they're going to go to bed an hour earlier so they don't end up losing sleep, this is not something that's going to last."

What are reasonable goals, then? It depends on how much people are willing to change, says Sharma. People can do little things like step away from their computer once an hour to take a brief walk or stretch.

Other potential goals could include taking more time to prepare meals at home and eating less fast food. Trying to sit down with your family for home-cooked meals a couple times a week is also healthy. But both involve making a commitment to invest more time to prepare healthy food at home, which could be an extra 30 to 60 minutes per day, notes Sharma.

Getting more sleep is also helpful, according to plenty of emerging data that demonstrates lack of sleep is a health risk because it negatively affects metabolism, mood and energy.

Sharma says making a conscious choice to be more satisfied and happy with your life, reframing the way you look at life, is also positive. And accept what you can't change.

So, what goals does Sharma live by to maintain a healthy weight?

"One of the most important things I do is maintain a work-life balance. I also try to stop working when I'm at home. I have lots of different

interests and hobbies I pursue. And I don't take myself too seriously, which is also important. When you think that everything you do is equally important—well, it's not, and it is key to try and figure that out."

More information: www.drsharma.ca/

Provided by University of Alberta

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