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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

# Wellness Monthly

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

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## Forget New Year's Resolutions! Make Life-Changing Decisions

Can you count how many New Year's resolutions you've actually made and kept? Or do most of your resolutions end up as broken promises?

If you're like the majority of us, you make New Year's resolutions with the best of intentions, but then January plods on into February, and before you know it, those resolutions are just a foggy memory. The whole idea of New Year's resolutions is to actually make changes and stick to them.

Here's how to make positive decisions in your life — and put them into action in 2009.

### What's disturbing you most in your life right now?

One of the keys to keeping your New Year's "decisions" is to make the right ones. Ask yourself this question: "What two things in my life are most disturbing to me right now?" This question helps you narrow down your choices to the things that are bothering you the most.

For instance, does your weight make you cringe every time you look in the mirror, or are you just mildly uncomfortable? Are you truly worried about your health because of smoking, or will you wait a little longer before you quit for good? Do you feel embarrassed to entertain friends because your backyard is such a mess, or are you satisfied to just close the blinds?

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## Tips to Use Along the Way

You've identified your specific goals. You've made an action plan. The following guidelines can lend you confidence and momentum:

- Use your past successes to create future success.
- Schedule specific, daily actions.
- Review your progress on a daily basis.
- Adjust those parts of your plan that aren't working.
- Put everything in writing — your ultimate goal, your milestones and the daily actions that must be taken.
- Share your new goals and your plan for success with family and friends.

### Upcoming Articles

January 2009  
Credit Card Debt

February 2009  
Working with Difficult People



Remember: the strength of your commitment to your New Year's decisions is in direct proportion to how uncomfortable you are with your current state of affairs. Don't bother about things that you can live with... make decisions about things that must change.

**Set specific, immediate goals.**

Once you've decided on just a couple areas you want to change, identify the specific changes you want to make. Let's say

weight loss is one of your central concerns. Instead of setting a vague goal ("I want to shed some pounds"), be specific. How many pounds do you want to lose, and by when?

Perhaps you want to finally banish cigarettes from your life. Are you going cold turkey, or will you cut down on how much you smoke? By when will you have completely stopped smoking?

If you want to have a backyard you're proud to use, are you going to do it in stages, or within a short period of time?

When you set specific, reasonable goals, you have a clear focus upon which to act... and your decisions begin to look achievable. If you approach a goal with honesty, and if you spend some time planning, long-lasting change is in your future.



## 3, 2, 1... Action!

Once you've decided what you want to change and set specific goals, you must have a rock-solid action plan. An action plan should describe exactly how you intend to meet your goals. It should include your step-by-step approach.

If you're going to lose those 30 pounds, how do you plan to lose them? You might want to seek professional help or get a weight loss buddy. You might begin by comparing workout tapes, or budgeting for a gym membership. If you've been successful in the past, use that past experience to develop a plan for achieving your goals.

If cleaning up the backyard is a central concern, consider how it might happen. Will it be a do-it-yourself project, or will you hire a professional? How much effort or money are you willing to put into the project? Where will you begin?

Without a specific plan designed to achieve success, chances are you'll get stuck dreaming about your goal rather than reaching it.

It's a good idea to share your action plan with trusted friends or family members. Since they know

you well, they can help assess its strength, and may give you ideas to make your plan even more effective.

Change isn't easy. Successfully achieving personal goals — especially those that involve relationship issues or changing behaviors — may require professional help. Asking for help is never a sign of weakness or failure, especially in situations too difficult to handle alone. UBH is here to help. Call or log on anytime for help with any of life's challenges.

## Resources

### United Behavioral Health

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.

[www.liveandworkwell.com](http://www.liveandworkwell.com)

Use the search phrase "New Year's Resolutions" for more tips on making satisfying life changes.

The information and therapeutic approaches in this article are provided for educational purposes only and are not meant to be used in place of professional clinical consultations for individual health needs. Certain treatments may not be covered in some benefit plans. Check your health plan regarding your coverage of services.