New Year Resolutions Are Back, And So Am I

By Ana-Marija Dolaskie — January 2, 2018

After 13 weeks of maternity leave — lots of joy and little sleep — I am back at work. In true New Years fashion, I — like many others — am thinking of making some resolutions for the year ahead.

Getting healthy has been one of the most common New Years resolutions since the beginning of time, it seems, so it's no surprise that many fitness centers see an uptick of memberships in the first week of January. Sadly, the hype quickly passes. About 75 percent of those who make a resolution — whether it be joining a gym or starting a diet — only keep it through the first week. By the end of the month, the number falls to 64 percent. By the end of the year, only 8 percent of people complete their resolutions. The dismal success rate is a clear indicator that resolutions could be counter-productive.

Last year, we made a video to show the timeline of most New Years resolutions, and it goes something like this:

\[\text{...}\]

So don't feel bad if you're already on a shaky start.

Instead of making strict demands of yourself in the new year, perhaps you can think about setting gradual, more realistic goals. When it comes to making health and fitness changes, we suggest looking to realistic accomplishments — ones you can actually keep. Rather than resolving to run a marathon within the first three months of the year when you've never ran more than a mile in your life, how about resolving to run a 5K instead? Last year, Dr. Ruth Kava, senior nutrition fellow at the council, advised us that these small, gradual changes are more likely to stick. For example, instead of vowing to cut carbs or fat out of your diet, why not cut the portions instead? Carbohydrates, especially good carbohydrates, give us energy and fuel our bodies throughout the day. There is no reason to deprive your body of certain nutritional needs to lose a few pounds.

See for yourself:

If you're serious about cutting down on calories, consider giving up alcohol. After the excess of Christmas, many people turn to "dry January" where they give up booze for the month, in hopes of cleansing out the system. Alcohol is packed with empty calories — those with no nutritional value. A 12 ounce glass of beer can rake in 200 calories, and about 20 minutes of biking to shed them.

When it comes to fitness, Dr. Kava suggests the buddy system: working out with a friend or trainer to keep yourself accountable. It's easy to skip the daily workout when no one else is relying on you to show up.
Hey, don't look at me — I'm breastfeeding and should be adding calories to my diet, not eliminating them. Whew!

More importantly for me is what I'm eating, rather than how much — and my New Years resolution is to be healthy and stay healthy for the sake of my child. Since I am breastfeeding, my alcohol intake is very limited (one small glass of wine once or twice per week). I try to get my greens in even though I have found out — the hard way — that many vegetables (cabbage, sprouts, onions, broccoli) can cause extreme gassiness in infants, which leads to sleepless nights and general discomfort for the baby. Dairy intake can also trigger gas and stomach pains in my 3-month-old so I have switched over to the dark side (Almond Milk) for my milk cravings. The change in diet has been an adjustment, but everything with a newborn in the home is now an adjustment. This is our new normal.

So perhaps this year, you can resolve to just live better: spend less time counting calories and more time living a balanced life. If you have trouble keeping the resolution, try finding your purpose. Here's mine: