

THINK AGAIN

THE KEY TO MAKING 2013 THE YEAR YOU FINALLY KEEP YOUR NEW YEAR'S HEALTH RESOLUTIONS? EXERCISE YOUR MIND FIRST.

By Natalia Sylvester

Got a New Year's resolution? Consider this: a third of people will have broken their resolutions by the end of January, and success rates drop as the year goes on. "Whether it's exercise or trying to change your diet... over time it's hard to keep up that enthusiasm," says David X. Marquez, Ph.D., an exercise psychologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago. We looked at popular health resolutions and found that keeping them involves challenging your body *and* your mind. Here's how to adjust your mind-set to achieve change.



RESOLUTION:

Lose weight

Mental block: Giving up if you don't see fast results

Adjust your mind-set: Dr. Marquez recommends setting goals that are S.M.A.R.T.: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-framed. Ten pounds in one week? Think smaller, like one to two pounds per week, to stay motivated longer. "Set short-term goals, but keep revising them," Dr. Marquez says. For example, if after two weeks you've lost three pounds, up it to eight pounds the next two months to keep pushing yourself.

RESOLUTION:

Exercise more

Mental block: Taking time away from family feels selfish

Adjust your mind-set: Don't think of that hour you spend exercising as time taken away, but as time added to a healthier life. Dr. Marquez suggests looking at the big picture: "In the long term, this is what's best for everybody. If the Latina woman is not feeling well, body or mind, that's going to affect many people, because she's the pillar of the family, really."

RESOLUTION:

Eat healthier

Mental block: It's difficult to resist Mom's tamales

Adjust your mind-set: Ask yourself if you're eating that extra *arepa* to make yourself happy, or to please whoever made it. In Latino communities, where meals come with sentimental attachments, turning down food can be guilt inducing, says Susan Aguinaga, M.S., who works with Dr. Marquez studying nutrition. Marisol Godinez-Brainin, a Los Angeles-based food coach, helps clients control this kind of emotional eating by emphasizing that showing *cariño* is something that happens through you, not through food. As a compromise, she suggests offering to bring a protein dish like fish or grilled chicken to family get-togethers.

RESOLUTION:

Get regular health exams

Mental block: Being afraid you'll find something wrong

Adjust your mind-set: "If [you] have the opportunity to get care before something

goes wrong, the chances of survival are much better," says Elda Ramirez, Ph.D., a nurse practitioner at the University of Texas Health Science Center. To make getting regular checkups a habit, Dr. Ramirez recommends scheduling them around your birthday. Start with a physical, Pap smear and breast exam, and ask your doctor about additional exams based on your age and family history.

RESOLUTION:

Stress less

Mental block: Thinking we have to be perfect

Adjust your mind-set: Next time you feel overwhelmed by life's demands, take a moment to reevaluate the origins of the stress. "Many Latinas subconsciously believe that, like our mothers, we too must graciously and 'perfectly' wear many hats," says Osmara Vindel, a life coach in Miami. She tells clients to stop and breathe: inhale for seven seconds, hold for seven seconds, exhale for seven, hold for seven. "You need to interrupt the story that's going on in your head. Do this each time you feel stressed to create a habit of calmness," advises Vindel.