

## IMPACT

Employee Newsletter

January—March 2008

### Did you know?

- Free "Simple Will" Kits are available from Claremont EAP
- A free credit report is available once per year
- Claremont EAP provides legal referrals for family law, consumer issues, traffic violations, and personal injury
- Referrals are available for child care, adult/eldercare, adoption assistance, school/college selection, and pet care

**Claremont EAP**  
800.834.3773

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Quick-Start Resolutions for the New Year* 1
- Conquering Those Hard-to-Break Habits* 2
- How to Set Priorities* 3

We're on the web  
[www.claremonteap.com](http://www.claremonteap.com)

## Quick-Start Resolutions for the New Year

Resolving to lead a healthier lifestyle is a good way to begin the New Year. But don't despair if you still haven't confirmed your New Year's Resolutions; there's still plenty of time to choose a better path for the year ahead. "Millions of Americans make resolutions that go unresolved largely because they fail to utilize proven behavior modification techniques to support their new goals," says Don R. Powell, Ph.D., president of the American Institute for Preventive Medicine in Southfield, Mich., and author of "365 Health Hints." "For starters, it's important to set realistic goals for yourself," he says. "It takes some time to develop a bad habit, so don't expect to change things overnight. In addition, try to work on only one habit at a time. It's not easy to change your behavior, and it can become overwhelming if you try to change too much, too soon." Here are 10 major changes, pick 1 or 2 that are important to you; work on them and move on to others when you have met your goals. "By keeping all 10 resolutions you can add years to your life and life to your years," Dr. Powell says.

### 10 Quick-Start Resolutions:

- **I resolve to get physical.**  
Sticking to a regular exercise routine is one of the most important steps you can take to improve your health and longevity. Starting this year, devote 30 minutes, three to four times a week to an aerobic activity you enjoy. Good choices include walking, running, swimming, biking, skating and aerobic dancing.
- **I resolve to maintain an ideal body weight.**  
This year, eat high-fat foods in moderation. Approximately one in two Americans is overweight, and these extra pounds contribute to heart disease, diabetes, stroke and an increased risk of certain cancers.
- **I resolve to stop smoking and try avoiding those people who still light up.**  
Cigarette smoking is the single-most preventable cause of illness in America today. Each year, six times more Americans die from cigarettes than were killed in the Vietnam War. Side stream smoke is just as bad; it can be deadly to non-smokers who inhale it on a regular basis.
- **I resolve to control my blood pressure.**  
If you haven't had your blood pressure checked recently, do so. Follow your doctor's instructions if it's high, and faithfully take any prescribed medication. If left untreated, high blood pressure is the primary cause of stroke.
- **I resolve to develop a strong social support network.**  
Studies have shown that people who have supportive relatives, friends and co-workers are sick less often than those who don't. Be a friend to others and keep your family close and caring.
- **I resolve to reduce my cholesterol.**  
This year have your cholesterol tested or retested, if necessary. The average cholesterol level in the United States is 215 -- 15 points above 200, which is considered healthy. If your level is high, follow your doctor's instructions and reduce your consumption of red meat, regular dairy products and food items high in saturated fats.
- **I resolve to control my hostility.**  
For your heart's sake, make an effort to control a bad temper. Studies have indicated that anger and hostility may be as bad for your heart as smoking and high blood pressure.
- **I resolve to avoid alcohol.**  
Of the 10 leading causes of death each year, alcohol is a contributing factor in six of them. Two corollary resolutions are to never drink and drive, and to never ride with someone who has been drinking.
- **I resolve to clean up psychological pollution.**  
People who live long lives characteristically possess a positive attitude about life. Resolve to stop indulging in negative thinking which can pollute your mind and negatively influence your health and emotional well-being.
- **I resolve to always buckle-up.**  
Make it a rule that you won't start your car until everyone is buckled-in. Wearing a seat belt greatly increases your odds of surviving a car accident.



## Conquering Those Hard-to-break Habits

If you want to lose weight, quit smoking, improve your diet or change practically any other bad habit, roll up your sleeves.

"Habit change is work," says Matthew A. Budd, M.D., retired assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and co-author of "You Are What You Say."

Why? Some habits that are the hardest to break are deeply embedded emotionally. Through food, for example, we learn how to soothe ourselves, beginning in infancy.

"At an early age, we learn that food, comfort and security are all connected," says Dr. Budd. "That's why some adults overeat when anxious."

### Dig deep

To break stubborn bad habits such as overeating, "you need to get behind the emotion that's driving the behavior," says Dr. Budd.

What to do first: "Determine the recurring circumstances that drive you to food or any other substance," he advises. If you notice you head to the vending machine whenever your boss gives you a new project, think about what's causing the anxiety that's causing you to eat.

If it's fear of failure, ask for help from someone else rather than seeking solace through food. Drink a glass of water or meditate and take a few deep breaths to shore up your confidence.

"Only when you address the emotions underlying the addictive or habitual behavior can you really begin to produce positive results," says Dr. Budd.

### Create a game plan

Once you're aware of the emotions driving habitual behaviors and you've developed strategies to deal with particularly troublesome habits, you can develop a practical plan that can help you accomplish your goals, such as losing five pounds by your birthday or giving up smoking.

During this planning stage, trouble-shoot to design a doable behavior-change plan. If, for example, you want to give up high-fat takeout dinners but don't have time to cook, make sure you stock your kitchen with low-fat meals, prepared salads and fruits and vegetables each week so you'll have easy, healthy meals on hand.



### Snap back after a slip

Once you've put your plan into action, beware. There will be times when you don't stick to it -- perhaps you'll eat too many dip-laden potato chips at a holiday party.

Don't despair. "To slip is to be human," says Dr. Budd. Instead of giving up on your plan and reverting to bad habits, use the suffering that's associated with the slip as a learning opportunity so you can avoid it in the future.

Ask yourself what caused the slip? Was it something practical -- such as going to the party too hungry, then standing by the potato chip bowl all night? Or was it something emotional, such as feeling stressed about a work project?

Once you've nailed what caused the slip, "let the slip go and forgive yourself," says Dr. Budd.

But before you resume your behavior-change plan, "see if it's in your heart to honestly recommit," he says. If so, strengthen your strategy and fortify your resolve by seeking emotional encouragement from a support group or a network of friends. The help they provide can be a powerful motivator.

"If you have other people watching your progress, you'll be less ready to break that commitment," says Dr. Budd. "But if it isn't in your heart to recommit, be honest about it because, otherwise, you'll just suffer more."

Timing is important when committing or recommitting to a behavior-change plan. "The ideal time to make a habit change is when your motivation is high and when your life is relatively predictable," says Dr. Budd.

A less-than-ideal time is when you're starting a new job, moving, switching careers or attending lots of social events. Your best bet: "Select a time that's a relative clearing in your life," says Dr. Budd.

## How to Set Priorities

When you've decided on a major goal, how do you plan out the steps to reach it? Part of your planning includes the question, "What's important to reach my goal?" By being specific about the big things, we can make sure that we do what's needed to get us there. This is called "setting priorities."

### Develop a Strategy

Let's say you've decided you want to save enough money to buy a house. In order to do that, let's say you need to save \$100 extra each month. One of the important steps might be to open a savings account specifically for this. Then, every payday, you'll deposit \$50 into the account. In order to have an extra \$50 to deposit, you might have to work five hours of overtime in each pay period. That's important to reaching your goal. So the overtime becomes a priority.

### Know What's Important

After you've saved \$300, you see a class advertised that can teach you how to buy real estate. The tuition is \$300. Well, you say, you're going to buy some real estate, so you wonder if you should take that class and spend the \$300. Isn't your goal to buy a house? Of course, with your timetable, you won't be in the market for another three years, and by then some of the information you spent your savings on may be outdated.

### Investigate Alternatives

Some activities take a lot of time, effort and money but don't help you reach your goal. You realize that your goal is to save enough money to buy a house, something that may never happen if you spend your money on things you don't need right now, such as real estate classes. Instead, you decide to read books from the library for free. Then, when the time comes to buy a house, you'll take a class if you still feel that you need it.

### Reaching Your Goal

By looking at your goal and your plan to reach it, you'll be able to put your own priorities in place. That's the way to reach your destination.



800.834.3773

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

**CLAREMONT EAP**

*Claremont distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.*

**Responding to the Human Factor in the World of Work**