Creating Resolutions You Can Keep

New Year’s resolutions are supposed to be a good thing, but more often than not, even with the best of intentions, our resolutions fall flat and leave us feeling defeated by the beginning of February or March. Whether your goal this year is to lose weight, or save more money for retirement, here are the “do’s” and “don’t’s” of setting goals for the new year:

Avoid these Resolution Pitfalls:

- **DON’T set goals that are too abstract.**
  A resolution that is vague is easy to lose sight of. A goal to “lose weight” does not have any clear beginning, middle or end point. A resolution to “eat healthier” is harder to track than “eat vegetables once a day” or “eat salad for lunch three times per week.”

- **DON’T forget to hold yourself accountable.**
  Accountability is the key to sticking to your goals. This is the reason why groups like Weight Watchers are effective; individuals set goals, check in, and receive incentives for meeting certain checkpoints along the way.

- **DON’T set a goal you aren’t committed to.**
  If your New Year’s resolution is to give up smoking for your significant other, then it will be harder to stick to. Setting a goal or making changes for someone else often breeds resentments and leads to feeling like a failure. Before you set a goal, ask yourself, “is meeting this goal going to make me happier?”

Adopt these Healthy Goal Setting Habits:

- **DO set realistic goals.**
  When creating a New Year’s resolution, start small. You can always add onto your goal throughout the year, but setting the bar too high in the beginning puts you at higher risk for giving up.

- **DO set SMART goals.**
  Make a plan. SMART goals are Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Managed. “Lose weight” is different than “I will lose 2 pounds per month from January to May by going to Spin Class on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and replacing my take-out lunch for a salad 3 times per week. I will weigh-in each Sunday and document my progress on my weight-loss calendar.”

- **DO be flexible.**
  If you are too rigid in your approach to setting goals for the new year, minor obstacles can throw you off course completely.

- **DO ask for support.**
  Share your goals and your experiences with family or friends. Share your successes and your struggles. Accepting help from those who care about you will strengthen your motivation to maintain your goals.