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Spring Clean Your Approach to Health

Try mindful mantras instead of grandiose goals

By Andrea Holwegner BSc, RD

I had a birthday this week and always find myself reflecting and dreaming about the year ahead.

I'm not a fan of setting dozens of grandiose goals (having done this and accomplishing very little, I know it only leads to feelings of failure and defeat). Most of us also don't have the time, energy and motivation to do extreme lifestyle makeovers. I've learned setting simple mindful mantras to improve health and other parts of your life can be far more effective for busy people than a long list of to-do's.

Since we are approaching the halfway point of the year, I'm encouraging you to reassess your health and spring clean those new year's resolutions you set that are not working out as planned.

Consider setting one mindful mantra that would apply to both your personal and professional life. Here are three common challenges we see in our nutrition counselling practice that inhibit our clients from moving forward in personal, family and work life. Which of these challenges apply to you?

1. Challenge: Inconsistency.

Mindful mantra: Consistency trumps commitment.

At the start of this year I realized after listening to small business expert Marc Leblanc that I was committed but failing with consistency in some parts of my personal and professional life. My mantra this year therefore became "consistency trumps commitment" and it is helping me "walk the talk" instead of just "talk the talk."

Obviously I am committed to my family, my health and my business, but without focusing on consistency sometimes I worked too long and my stress management and quality family time was shortened. Having a consistent plan to leave the office on time each day made meant ensuring my time at work was well planned and prioritized.

Carving out a minimum consistent goal of two non-negotiable fitness efforts per week in my calendar has made even the busiest weeks achievable and usually something I can exceed. (Previously I set the weekly target much higher and failed to book these as appointments in my calendar. I always hoped I could fit it in somewhere, but when my schedule wouldn't allow this).



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Keeping with my mantra, next on my agenda is to build in a consistent plan for yoga.

2. Challenge: Procrastination.

Mindful mantra: Pounce on priorities.

I wonder how many people are spending more time watching the food network and reality cooking shows than actually cooking?

What really matters to you? What is a must-have versus a nice-to-have in order for you to be happy and healthy? Pounce on your priorities first and minimize time wasters such as endless hours of television, social media posting and Internet searching.

If you are unhappy with your weight or your health, waiting until you feel like going for a walk or hoping you will one day start craving veggies is not likely to happen. As the old saying goes, you have to “fake it till you make it.” If you act as if you are someone who enjoys exercise or eating a salad, in time you actually will.

Remember that all of us need enough variety, rewards and relaxation to keep motivated. Since perfectionism often leads to procrastination, remember that there is a difference between being the best and doing your best.

3. Challenge: Overwhelmed

Mindful mantra: One in, one out.

You can do anything, just not everything. You can't do it all — work-life balance is a myth. Accept that balance means some days things will be in check, others will be anything but. The key is remembering that your family, work and personal self all need to be taken care of — but just not at every minute of each day.

Consider my husband's analogy to treat your schedule like clothes in your closet. One new item added should be followed by one item out for donation. Slow down and check in with yourself before saying yes to opportunities that come your way to protect your time for what really matters. All choices (even the good ones) also have consequences.

Registering your kids in sports after school or attending a fitness class after work is great but can mean that evening meals can take a hit. To keep healthy family meals flowing for your family what needs to shift? Perhaps enough healthy leftovers need to be prepared the day before or carving out time on Sunday afternoon to prepare a few meals for the week to come.

Andrea Holwegner, known as the Chocoholic Dietitian, is founder and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting Inc., a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and a media expert for the Dietitians of Canada. For nutrition counselling information and to sign up for a free monthly newsletter loaded with nutrition tips, recipes and more visit www.healthstandnutrition.com. Twitter @chocoholicRD.

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