NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS: MORE THAN JUST WORDS

Many of us have inspiring quotes as part of our email signature; organizations of all types and sizes have mission and vision statements. These words were carefully chosen and are meaningful at many levels. How often do we truly let these words inspire us to take action? New Year’s resolutions are broken so often, they now have the connotation of a joke rather than a goal statement. With the New Year, let’s all strive to turn the words of our resolutions into action. Create resolutions that promote success by following these suggestions:

A good resolution, like any good goal, must be specific, attainable, and measurable. For example, if your goal is to spend more time with your partner, it needs to be stated specifically — “I’m going to spend five hours per week with my significant other.” Better yet, specify the actual times you plan to spend together as follows: Monday night 7 to 9 p.m., Friday night 7 to 10 p.m. Realism in resolution making is an especially important ingredient for success. If a goal is not realistic, it will not be attainable. Overly lofty goals should be broken down into more manageable efforts, and realistic resolutions are easier to measure. Being able to measure the success of our efforts is essential to the process. We must be able to celebrate our successes and use them as a springboard for additional successes.

There are five P’s which should be considered when making and following through with New Year’s Resolutions: (1) progress, (2) past in the past, (3) passion, (4) persistence, and (5) partner. Goals are not about perfection, but progress. Find joy in the progress you make as opposed to the perfection you might be seeking. Often our resolutions are about changing something from our past. Past experiences can be helpful in creating a motivation for change but can also hinder efforts if we allow ourselves to be bogged down with the baggage of our past. Seek forgiveness from others, forgive yourself, and look forward to a better future — leave the past in the past.

Set resolutions that you feel passionate about. Passion often determines personal priority. Priority will determine the level of importance you assign to a particular task and ultimately your chances of success. Such changes require persistence! There is no simple solution to the process of persistence — it simply comes down to a lot of hard work that will have physical, mental, spiritual, and social components. Strength to be persistent can be found in the support of others. Teaming up with a partner(s) in an effort to achieve a goal could make the difference between success and failure. A partner can provide support and accountability, both essential resources when pursuing a goal.

Knowing that our words hold the power of action sends a powerful message to ourselves and those around us. From all of us at EAP, have a terrific New Year!

Whatever was sufficient to get us to this point is insufficient to get us further...
Think Ahead to Outsmart Holiday Stress

Before you pack up those holiday decorations, take a moment to assess the events of the season. What worked well? What didn’t turn out as planned? It is usually much easier to identify what needs to be changed now instead of waiting until next November. Write yourself a note or “To Do” list of what you would like to change next year, and put it in the first box of holiday decorations you’ll open next fall. Or, staple it to the October page of your 2006 calendar. What new holiday recipe was a real hit? Did you hear of any unique gift ideas that you’d like to try next year? A little reflection can go a long way in making the next holiday season flow smoothly. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- **Learn from others.** There are several practical, unique ideas for affordable holiday gifts and meals online, as well as advice on how to get organized, at websites like www.organizedchristmas.com. Make a note of your favorite online ideas on the “To Do Next Year” list.

- **Shop Ahead.** Take advantage of holiday clearance sales to stock up on holiday necessities such as wrapping paper, gift bags, and storage containers. Consider using Christmas tree ornaments (purchased on clearance) as small birthday, hostess, or “thank-you” gifts throughout the year.

- **Use snow-days wisely.** Stuck inside due to harsh winter weather? Take an hour or two to de-clutter a room or clean out a closet. Then, reward yourself with designated “free” time, to enjoy the fruits of your labor and relax.

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Cranberry-Walnut Green Bean Sauté

*This recipe is a flavorful, contemporary option for a special meal any time of the year.* Its unique combination of seasonal ingredients are sure to please everyone!

- 2 Pounds green beans, fresh or frozen
- 1/2 Cup dried cranberries
- 2 Tablespoons butter or olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 Small sweet onion, chopped
- 1/2 Cup chopped walnuts (optional)
- 3 Tablespoons tangerine-pomegranate juice OR orange-cranberry juice

Cook or steam green beans until they are crisp-tender; set aside. In a large skillet, cook onion in oil or butter until they are soft and translucent. Add juice, balsamic vinegar, and dried cranberries. Simmer for 10 minutes. Combine green beans and walnuts with sauce and continue to simmer until green beans are heated through and cooked to desired consistency. Serve immediately.

**Time Saver:** Prepare the sauce and green beans the day before your event; store them separately in the refrigerator overnight. Reheat by first warming the sauce over medium-low; stir in the green beans and walnuts and simmer until warm.