

‘Smart’ New Year’s Resolutions

Every year, when I go to the gym in January, I am surrounded by a sea of unfamiliar faces. Fitness centres everywhere are overcrowded with those who have vowed to improve their health and fitness by committing to New Year’s Resolutions of going to the gym. While this is a very noble idea, little by little, the crowd dissipates until by the end of the month, it is more or less just the regulars who are still in attendance.

With such good intentions, why do most people fail to stick with their healthy lifestyle commitment? Often, it is improper goal-setting that is the culprit. One way to increase the chances of creating achievable goals is by using the ‘SMART’ principle.

‘SMART’ goals are...

Specific - The more specific, the better. For example, ‘getting healthy’ is not very specific - what exactly does that mean? Completing a 10K race, following the Canada’s Food Guide, or being flexible enough to touch your toes, are better examples of specific goals.

Measurable - How will you know when you’ve met the goal? ‘Get stronger’ is a tough goal to measure but “bench press 10% more” is something that can actually be assessed.

Adjustable - Be flexible with goals - things don’t always happen as anticipated.

Realistic - Goals should be challenging but attainable with hard work.

Timed - Goals should have a time-line. ‘Someday’ is not a time-line - give yourself a specific due date.

Truth be told, I am not a New Year’s resolutions kind of person - I don’t like to feel limited by only setting goals once per year. Nonetheless, whether you are the type who likes to use the beginning of a new year to jump start your self-improvement plan, or are a more frequent goal-setter, using the SMART principle will help with successful goal-setting.