

# Change to fit – gently

Estelle Ellis

ellise@timesmedia.co.za

## Don't panic, it takes time, just don't give up

**D**ON'T panic if you haven't quite made a triumphant start to realising your new year's health and fitness resolutions. Experts say the key is to take it slow, don't let failure turn into abandonment and don't think that January brings with it a magical resolve that will help you change your life.

"Some of you may have been trying to lose weight, some want to stop smoking and some may have decided to study to become an astronaut," said Miles Harrop, the mind coach from the Integrative Health Centre in Walmer.

So why do we have such problems maintaining achieving goals? Harrop suggests possible reasons:

- You didn't make it clear or specific enough;
- You set your goals in a great state of mind, not predicting that you may have to maintain the action in a less positive frame of mind;
- You didn't develop a plan;
- You made your goal unrealistically big, or unrealistically

quick;

- You didn't engineer your environment to support you;

- You didn't learn how other people did it.

Harrop said he had developed a seven-step process that could be implemented today to achieve your goals.

- Get clear on what you want. State your outcome;

- Find strong reasons why this will make your life great in many contexts;

- Find reasons why failing will be painful;

- Set small goals with frequent rewards;

- Plan your journey;

- Learn visualisation techniques like self-hypnosis, neuro-linguistic programming and guided mindfulness;

- Have fun on the way to your goal.

Tanya Wyatt from the health and fitness consultancy Happy Body said you shouldn't wait for a specific date to make lifestyle changes.

"Resolutions are a great idea – just not New Year's resolutions! You shouldn't postpone taking steps to change a bad habit until the start of a new year. What's wrong with now?"

"Change is hard. But putting all your expectations into one specific time and doing nothing to change your habit in the meantime is a sure-fire way to fail."

We also somehow think that we can manage more than one significant change, she noted! "But if change is so hard, trying more than one at a time will be near impossible. You'll fail, feel bad about yourself, fall off the wagon and have to start all over again next year."

Wyatt said to make successful resolutions you have to understand that change is very hard – so don't expect it to come easily.

"Change takes quite a while to implement successfully and requires repetition. Make sure it's a change that's feasible, realistic, do-able and desirable. Don't

change for someone else or decide on a change that is going to be really hard to implement.

"Try one change at a time until it's ingrained. Be gentle with yourself. You may well slip up many times but don't berate yourself. Just acknowledge the error, congratulate yourself for trying anyway – and then try again."

Wyatt said her get fit advice is:

- Decide on two days a week at a set time. Diarise these times and make them non-negotiable;

- Go to gym on these two days and work out for just 20 minutes;

- After a month of managing this commitment, increase it to three times a week, still for only 20 minutes. Do not increase the number of sessions until you have accumulated a month of going successfully twice a week.

- Once you can manage three times a week for 20 minutes, start increasing intensity or gym time, depending on your goals;

- From there, you can increase the number of sessions if you want to.

**Try one change at a time until it's ingrained**