



OBTAINABLE RESOLUTIONS

By Owen Rothstein

Change...a word and concept that flat-out scares many people. It's an idea that makes others uncomfortable and squirmy. Yet every year, January 1st rolls around and those same people firmly declare their intention to make a change in the coming year. A New Year's Resolution is born (or several). The most popular of all resolutions center around food choices, physical fitness and overall health. It seems that we all want to improve our health, how we feel and how we look.

Perhaps it is our busy lifestyles that lead us to eat more convenient, less healthy foods throughout the year. Perhaps it is the myriad of entertainment, sports-ertainment, news-ertainment, web-ertainment choices that bombards us daily and leads us to exercise less and less. Perhaps it is just the relentless onslaught of food and festivities that start in late November and carries through the New Year that allows the pounds to pile on. Whatever it is, there's January 1st staring us in the face and most of us choose to face that squirmy, uncomfortable fear...change.

First, a few facts... In a 2013 SupermarketGuru.com Consumer Panel Survey, sponsored by ConAgra Foods, 85% of respondents said they have resolved to improve their eating habits. More than 70% have made a similar resolution in the past, while only 32% self-report sticking with that resolution and changing their eating habits long-term. That amounts to roughly 1 in 3 of those surveyed that had lasting success.

Assuming that we all want to be the 1 in 3 that succeeds, it may help to have a few tips to help us get there. Here are a few small adjustments that can add up to big changes and help make that Resolution result in a new, healthier you:

1. **Be positive!** - In almost every situation, attitude and mindset have an enormous effect on your success. If you look at this resolution as denying yourself food, drink or fun you are destined to fail. Try to think of it as gaining health, gaining energy, gaining success...it'll go a long way.
2. **Add, don't subtract!** - Of course you are trying to get to a goal, but you don't have to get there by limiting your choices, you can get there by adding good choices to your existing lifestyle. There is a popular commercial currently airing that says that "and" is better than "or" (for instance - Bed "or" Breakfast). So, when you sit for a burger, don't deny yourself the fries...just get a smaller order "and" a side salad. Don't cut out the cookies, just add a piece of fruit every now and again.
3. **Remember what you learned in kindergarten!** - "You are what you eat." Nothing could be simpler. There is an old term that refers to computer programming that relates, GIGO. It means Garbage In, Garbage Out. Make smart choices about eating locally grown foods from unadulterated sources. Less Processed = More Healthy...always. Only Junk Food = Only Junk Body...always. Refer to point #2 and add some good stuff into the mix.

4. **Learn a little bit beyond what you learned in kindergarten!** - If you take the time to learn a little bit about nutrition, the growth in your knowledge will likely result in some shrinking in your waist. A few highlights would be that carbohydrates are not the enemy (learn about the Glycemic Index...it'll help and it makes sense). Your body needs fats (there are healthy kinds). All experts are not necessarily experts, and (maybe most importantly) Timing is Everything! If you're looking for an "expert" that will further explain what I've just said and more, I highly recommend Michael Pollan...he's got it right. You can also try something new like signing up for a healthy cooking class at your local supermarket or trying new, in-season fruits and vegetables that you haven't tried before.

5. **Eat more often!** - Sounds crazy if you're trying to lose weight, right? It isn't. More and more studies are confirming that smaller, more frequent meals are a good choice for weight maintenance and overall health. Eating more frequently (especially low-glycemic meals) helps prevent insulin spikes. This helps limit inflammation in the body and helps keep your body from wanting to store fat. From a psychological standpoint, it keeps you from feeling like you're denying yourself food. The USDA suggests a daily caloric intake of about 2,000 calories for an average adult, so I'd suggest 5-7 meals a day of about 300 calories each. That should keep the motor humming!

6. **Exercise!** - OK, you knew this part was coming. In 2013, the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released their findings that the obesity rate in the US had leveled off (stopped increasing) between 2010 -2012, for the first time in 25 years. The rate of people self-reporting a rise in exercise levels increased during that same time. Coincidence? I think not. Your body's metabolism is actually a very simple thing to understand. The higher your lean muscle to fat ratio is, the higher your metabolism. If you build (or tone) muscle, the ratio goes up and your metabolism goes up. The faster your metabolism, the better your body processes calories. It is a domino effect that can go either way. So get out of your chair and go move around, and then move around some more. It will definitely help you get to your goals faster.

7. **Create behaviors, not rules!** - Like I said before, this is about adding to your life, not limiting yourself. You can't "cheat" if you aren't on a diet, you can just make a choice to have the chips and the piece of fruit. Diets and the "rules" that accompany them are about short-term results, not long-term change. Behavior change takes work, but most things worth doing take work. If you look at your resolution as being for life, rather than for the New Year, you'll be better suited to develop new, better behaviors that will continue to serve you throughout your lifetime.

GOOD LUCK, AND I'LL SEE YOU AT THE GYM, OR THE FARMER'S MARKET, OR AT THAT COOKING CLASS! HAPPY NEW YEAR! HAPPY NEW YOU!