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Employee Assistance Services for Education

don't make resolutions
build habits

MESSAGE FROM EASE

As we welcome the new year, it is also a great time to welcome new habits into our life. January not only marks the start of a new month and year, but the beginning of a new chapter in life.

Frequently during this time, people tend to make resolutions for the year. These resolutions may be visions that we have for ourselves, or goals that we hope to accomplish. However, it can be difficult to turn these resolutions into daily actions. Resolutions are difficult to stick with, especially once "life" gets busy again.

This year, change the focus from resolutions to building small sustainable habits. Habits allow us to carry out daily activities that are vital to our lives. They are much more reliable than a resolution because they require time to develop. Once you've established a habit, it can be hard to stop it, just like brushing your teeth every morning.

This year, identify 1-2 small habits that will lead to your larger goal or vision for yourself. Incorporating new healthy habits into your lifestyle can produce great long-term benefits.

We hope this new year that you welcome healthy habits into your life with EASE!

Monthly Article

**Building Healthy Habits:
Small Habits Produce Life
Changes**

EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

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SMALL HABITS PRODUCE LIFE CHANGES

By: EASE Staff

The start of a new year often signifies a fresh start, a new beginning, and new goals for many people. While some find themselves setting health goals such as losing weight, eating healthier, and incorporating exercise into their routine, others may plan to increase sleep and decrease social media usage. The beginning of the new year is the perfect time to start good, healthy habits and leave behind negative habits that don't align with who you are. So what are habits? Habits are defined as a pattern of behavior that occur gradually and automatically. The repetition of any behavior, good or bad, can create a habit and become a determining factor in your quality of life. There are a many ways that you can incorporate healthy habits into your lifestyle. Develop healthy habits that support your mental, physical, and spiritual wellness.

Tips on Building Healthy Habits

1. **Know your habits.** Create awareness around your current habits, those you want to keep and those you want to change. Look for patterns in your behavior and what triggers unhealthy habits.
2. **Make a plan.** Identify unhealthy habits, set realistic goals, and write down the steps to achieve them.
3. **Ask for support.** Seek support from your partner, friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors.
4. **Track your progress.** Record how things are going in order to help you stay focused (e.g., keep a journal).
5. **Imagine the future.** Think about the benefits of staying consistent and on track. Consider the positive experiences or rewards of your healthy habit.
6. **Reward yourself.** Give yourself a healthy reward when you have achieved a goal.
7. **Be patient.** Change takes time and so does improvement. Focus on the progress that you're making every day, not on perfection.

https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2018/03/creating_healthy_habits

Researchers at Harvard University studied the effects of healthy habits on Americans' health and lifespan. They collected data on five different low-risk lifestyle factors. **The five factors included a healthy eating pattern, not smoking, 3.5 hours of physical activity each week, drinking moderate amounts of alcohol, and maintaining a normal weight.** Researchers found that women who did not adopt any of the five healthy habits were estimated to live on average 14 years longer and men an average of 12 years longer. The study found that each of the five healthy lifestyle factors significantly lowered the risk of total death, death from cancer, and death from heart disease.

As you consider which habits you're going to incorporate into your lifestyle, you may experience the **four stages of change**. These include Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance. In the first stage of change, Contemplation, you may be thinking about the change and building your motivation to start. It can be difficult to make the leap from thinking about change and taking action. In this stage, ask yourself about the 'pros' and 'cons' of changing your habits. Consider the long-term benefits of making those changes. Once you've reached the second stage, Preparation, look at your list of pros and cons. Consider ways in which you can make a plan and act on that behavior. In the third stage, Action, stick to your plan and act on it. Review your plan, your progress, and reward yourself. In the last stage, Maintenance, remain consistent with your new habit. Find ways to cope with what life throws at you and do your best to avoid slip-ups. Of course, if this happens, accept it, and quickly get back to your plan.

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/healthy-habits-can-lengthen-life>

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diet-nutrition/changing-habits-better-health>



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EASE has counselors available when you need it.

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