

Keep the CHA



At the start of a new year, with its looming challenges, we all feel pressure to make grand resolutions and set life-enhancing goals. Setting them is the the easy part. Here's how to make them stick.

Words | ROSANNE BUCHANAN

IT'S resolution time again. It doesn't help that virtually every magazine and self-help book we read is about making changes. The message is: you must have goals! But it's pointless going through the motions if there's no energy behind the sentiment or deep down you're fighting the change.

Easier said than done

Setting intentions to change your life requires a bit more work than simply uttering the words. A new year holds the promise of new possibilities to make our lives happier, healthier and more meaningful but we need to focus on how to prepare for life changes that will stick.



IGNITE



SET SPECIFIC GOALS

Be realistic and review 2015

Clinical psychologist Cara Browde is not a fan of once-a-year resolutions. Her advice is to be realistic about your goals, and rather than waiting for January, why not start right now? Also ask yourself why you haven't achieved goals during the year. 'There are always reasons why we don't do things and it would be helpful to reflect and consider why (without judgement), as opposed to merely promising ourselves that next year will be different,' she says.



A vision board is a powerful tool to help you 'illustrate' what you want in your life

Johannesburg-based life coach Dina Cramer (www.ignitesq.com) says the reason most resolutions fail is because we don't connect to the 'why' of our goals. 'You need to be inspired and connect emotionally and visually to that goal,' she says.

For example, if you want to lose weight, then you need to take a couple of minutes every day to visualise and connect with the feeling of being thin and how your life would be different. This means closing your eyes and using your imagination: seeing yourself dressed in 'thin' clothes and feeling lighter and happier. This will help you to resist temptations.

Another powerful tool is a vision board, where you choose lifestyle images from magazines that appeal to you (this could be objects, a job, home or relationship – any image that resonates with your true desires) and paste them onto a board to 'illustrate' what you want in your life. You could also

use visual discovery site Pinterest for this purpose.

The notion may seem like child's play but the exercise is all about focus and energy. And you can have some fun – add stickers, glitter and coloured pens to the mix so you can decorate your board – or make it a family activity.

Dr George Blair-West, a medical doctor/psychiatrist and author of *Weight Loss for Food Lovers*, agrees with Cramer. He believes the reason 80% of dieters fail is because dieting is not about what we eat, it's about why we eat.

His advice for weight loss in 2016: 'It's all about sustainability first and everything else second! The focus is on building an eating lifestyle rather than focusing on weight loss.'

His plan is simple: get to know yourself and your own mind. His approach is not a 'diet'. There are no forbidden foods, just smaller portions and learning to savour your food. Find out more at www.weightlossforfoodlovers.com.

Part of the journey of life is about making changes; always striving for more.'

Designing life

Kate Emmerson, life coach and author of *Ditch your Glitch*, believes in taking stock. We all need to assess ourselves in the areas of health/fitness, relationships, leisure/fun, career, spirituality, self-development, finances and home/family. She says once you've evaluated your life (visit www.kate-emmerson.com for a free online course), you can set new goals and 'redesign' your life.

The more integrity you have, the more likely you'll achieve your goals.

SET SPECIFIC 'DELIBERATE ACTIONS'

Making good choices consistently over time will create success, health and happiness, according to Jeff Olsen, author of *The Slight Edge*. Just as bad choices repeated over time lead to failure.

For example, choosing not to exercise one day won't kill you but over time it may affect your health. If your intention is to lose weight, then order a salad instead of a burger; making healthier choices consistently will create success. The same applies to exercise – be active daily rather than opting for a longer weekly session. Aim for smaller choices on a daily basis to support your goal.

HONOUR YOUR PROMISES

The biggest stumbling block many of us face is that we don't fully commit to our goals. Integrity is doing what we say we are going to do and committing to our words.

The key is not to give into thoughts and feelings. Take this example: if you set a goal of exercising every morning but, when your alarm rings at 5am, you make excuses, you're doing just that.

According to Cramer, our brain acts like a computer

recording everything we say, think and do.

Each time we renege on something, our brains take note of this, affecting the outcome of any goal we set. For example, if you keep your word 60% of the time and your goal is to earn R50,000 per month, your brain will aim for 60% of this because this is what it believes you are capable of earning.

So the more integrity you have, the more likely you'll achieve your goals.



