

Health & Well-being

Information and motivation for improving your life

Personal betterment—a lifetime journey

Our lives comprise so many things that draw our attention away from ourselves and what is important for our continued good health and personal well-being.

This section is designed to refocus us on our path to personal betterment.



Illustration by Samantha Jones

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Personal betterment

Taking small steps to achieve big goals

by Faith DeAmbrose

The path to personal betterment and well-being is made up of small steps in all parts of our lives, health professionals advise.

Obesity: the number two cause of preventable deaths

An article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (March 2005) suggests that the current rise in childhood obesity may actually decrease overall life expectancy of the country's youngest generation. Although not everyone in the medical community agrees with this study, most find that the rise in obesity in both children and adults will be costly at the very least.

"Excess weight not only causes widespread health effects, but also results in a tremendous economic burden," finds a June 2004 study in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. "It is estimated that obesity costs the United States \$117 billion each year" in direct and indirect health-care costs, including costs incurred by the employer for lost wages and productivity. A majority of the health-care costs associated with obesity are believed to be paid by the federal Medicaid system and therefore through taxation.

Obesity is linked to type-2 diabetes, cancer, heart disease, cardiovascular problems, an increased risk of osteoarthritis, hypertension, and is believed to worsen existing health problems. Two thirds of adults and between 20 and 30 percent of children in the U.S. are considered to be overweight or obese, and obesity is ranked as the number two cause of preventable deaths in the U.S. in a number of medical studies. Complications caused by obesity, explained Dr. Bob Hamburg, a pediatrician at Eastern Maine Medical Center, can begin as early as age 5, causing hypertension and abnormal lipid count.

The social obstacles to well-being

Although genetic predisposition is believed to account for some of the problem, behavioral patterns and social circumstances are believed to account for an even larger portion. Busy lifestyles and schedules, one-parent households and just being tired after a hard day's work often create the notion that fast-food or prepackaged food is a better, easier way to feed oneself or family. Media consumption is also considered to be a deterrent from outdoor activity and exercise, and sedentary lifestyles are becoming more common. The choices we make every day affect our health, explained Barbara Peppy, direc-

tor of Healthy Peninsula in Blue Hill, who believes a cultural shift is needed in the basic habits and choices one makes about one's health to ensure long-lasting health and well-being.

Building better habits into our lives surrounding food and exercise will allow us to live better with little effort. "Large changes aren't necessary," said Peppy, "small steps are all that are needed to achieve these goals."

Paying attention to what we eat and how we eat it is also an important factor in our overall well-being, says Ruth Tainter, a registered nurse at Blue Hill Memorial Hospital. "If we take a potato, for instance, and add a lot of sour cream and butter to it we have essentially turned a low-fat food into a high-fat food—we have out-caloried the baked potato," she said, noting how easy it is for this to occur.

Holmberg recently helped to create a pilot program at Blue Hill Memorial Hospital along with Dr. Meredith Norris, Stephanie Dow and Helen Barnett called "Everybody a Healthy Body." The program is aimed at preventing obesity and incorporating healthy habits into family lifestyles. The program utilizes local (volunteer) physical activity resources such as yoga, fitness instruction and karate, and incorporates a mindful approach to the behavioral aspects of overeating or impulse eating.

Food is the body's fuel and, simply stated, what is put into our bodies determines how we feel. According to Tainter, "nutritious meals make us feel better" and although that may seem like common sense, a diet high in sugars and carbohydrates, low in protein, or not close to meeting daily nutritional values will affect not only our physical well-being, but our emotional well-being as well. "Our mood is affected because it is our brains that are most affected by our nutritional status," said Tainter.

Smoking: using as directed may cause death

When talking about achieving a healthy lifestyle one can not forget to talk about smoking, explained tobacco coordinator Sally Christ at Healthy Peninsula. The problems associated with tobacco are multifaceted and range from financial (the average pack-a-day smoker spends approximately \$2,500 a year on cigarettes) to health hazards. (According to media critic Jean Kilbourne, tobacco is the only product on the market that can kill you when used as directed).

Secondhand smoke, also called environ-

mental tobacco smoke, is a primary contributor to asthma in children and among the top reasons children of smokers in Maine visit the emergency room during winter months.

"Parents want to do the best for their children but the reality is they might just not know" the magnitude of the effects of secondhand smoke, said Christ.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, secondhand smoke is 1) classified by the Environmental Protection Agency as a group A carcinogenic (causes cancer in humans), 2) causes lung cancer, 3) causes coronary heart disease—doubles the risk of heart attack, 4) increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, 5) causes serious respiratory problems in children, including increased incidents of ear infections, bronchitis, pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses, and 6) increases the number and severity of asthma attacks.

Stress: An enemy of well-being

Stress is another enemy of well-being said Peppy, Christ and Tainter. Stress is found at home, at work and can even be found at the checkout counter of your local store depending on the situation. When stress occurs the body produces adrenaline, sugars, protein and cholesterol, which in turn build up in joints and muscles. (Stress also elevates blood sugar, heart rate and blood pressure.) The most common way to rid these hormones from the body is through exercise. "If these hormones are not expelled they will linger in your body and affect your sense of well-being," said Tainter, who added that 15 minutes of exercise each day can keep you from feeling achy and depressed.

"We are living life on a fast-track," said Peppy, "and we are losing our health in the process."

What to do—oh, what to do

So what do you do if you are overweight

Stop procrastinating!

Everyone procrastinates at one time or another. However, for some it is a major problem that results in wasted time, missed opportunities, poor performance and increased stress. Twenty percent of people identify themselves as chronic procrastinators.

There are two major causes of procrastination. The first is avoidance. We procrastinate to avoid overwhelming tasks, difficult tasks, unpleasant tasks or to avoid change. The second is fear and anxiety. We procrastinate because of our fear of failure, fear of success, fear of criticism, fear of making mistakes or fear of rejection.

With this information in mind, if you are guilty of frequent procrastination, try the following tips to end this bad habit.

1. Identify the reasons why you procrastinate. Examine how avoidance or fear and anxiety are at the root of your procrastination. Identify the reason(s) you put off a particular task and then come up with solutions to help you overcome the reason(s) for your procrastination. For example, if you recognize that you are putting off a project because it just seems so large that you are overwhelmed and thus not starting it at all, the solution may be to break the project down into smaller pieces and work on it step by step.

2. Do the easiest part first. Start with what is easiest, so that you experience immediate success, which will give you the fuel and motivation to continue.

3. Break large tasks up into smaller, manageable pieces. Take unpleasant or difficult tasks and break them down into small steps and tackle them one step at a time. Create a timeline for yourself to accomplish these smaller tasks.

4. Write it down. Schedule time to work

or if you work behind a desk most of the day, if you have a busy and demanding life and things seem to come at you from all directions?

Start with small simple steps, the experts say.

- For every 55 minutes you spend behind a desk, take five minutes and stretch your muscles.

- Set realistic expectations about your job and family—don't be afraid to set boundaries when it comes to taking your work home.

- Create an encouraging network or find a work-out or walking buddy.

- Take a "vegetable vacation" and try something new to incorporate more vegetables into your diet.

- Resolve to smoke outside the house and car and away from children.

- Learn about portion sizes and take the time to read nutritional labels.

- Encourage sit-down family dinners and engage the entire household in its preparation.

- Create a food journal and examine what you are eating.

- Utilize the "exercise equipment" already in your home (for free) such as the stairs, hand-washing dishes or spending time in the garden.



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For further information

In preparing material for this section, Penobscot Bay Press interviewed only some of the many health care providers and professionals in our area. For additional information, see the health care section of the Bay Community Register, available at our newspaper offices. Health & Well-being issues #1 and #2 are available on our Web site, www.penobscotbaypress.com. Go to Community Information, Captain's Quarters, then archives.

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Simplicity, clarity, control: taking charge of our physical and mental “stuff”

by Sharon Bray

Twenty years ago Paul Carter's kitchen cupboard held two plates, two bowls, two cups, and two each of knife, fork and spoon, plus equally meager utensils and pots for cooking. The producer of a weekly nature program for Maine Public Radio and similar programs, Carter's sound recording and editing equipment dominated his sparse three-room apartment. Having survived a nasty divorce and a nearly fatal heart attack, Carter was determined to live more simply for mental, spiritual and physical health. He has since developed other careers and continues an active life.

Although Carter's Spartan lifestyle may not be ideal for most people, many of us are beginning to lean in his direction. We fight clutter and over-commitment even as we buy more electronic gadgets, clothes, jewelry, toys or artwork to fill every minute we are not at work to earn a living. In addition to paid work, some of us over-fill with lists of good works: volunteer jobs, making piles of possessions to give away, clipping articles from newspapers for family and friends.

Cathy Hart of Deer Isle has operated a business offering to help people organize and reduce material possessions from clothes to clippings and old paper files.

"Most people have too many things...too much stuff," Hart says. As evidence, she notes the "proliferation of rental units, thrift shops and yard sales" all across America.

"I help people get clutter under control and find ways to keep it from coming back," she said in a recent interview.

Most of her clients are women ages 50 and older. Some are dead. That is, she works to organize and distribute estates after families are completely clear about wills and wishes of the deceased person. Hart's de-cluttering career actually started when she was hired to handle the estate of a friend who died. Fortunately, the friend had left many clear instructions.

When Hart works with individuals at an hourly rate, she starts with a free consultation

to set goals. Does the client want to tackle a particular room? Just one shelf or the entire room? Hart and her client start by making lists together and setting limits.

Many of her clients are very busy people who are more interested in doing and learning other things rather than spending time cleaning house or sorting papers. They may have more money or more people who like to give them things they seldom look at or use. She also notes that older clients who have lived through wars or a depression are more inclined to save the kinds of things that were once hard to come by: string, straight pins, plastic containers.

At her own house, Hart says, "I am ruthless. I don't bring in something new unless I get rid of something." She also belongs to a social "swap group" that meets once a month to exchange items they no longer want to keep. She often cheats and brings stuff but goes home empty-handed.

Besides less dust, mold and other directly health-related benefits, a good clutter-clearing, her own or someone else's, "feels good. I get kind of a high," she says, adding, "I really like to be able to find things."

At the Center for Studying Mindfulness in Blue Hill, Nancy Hathaway describes similar goals for "reduction of clutter in the mind." She says our lives become more simple and healthy if we reduce extra thinking. Making "moment by moment choices to be present in a situation or in life," we can reduce stress and health problems related to stress.

People can control their thinking rather than let random or racing thoughts take over. For example, she says a person who thinks about work while cooking dinner is more likely to burn the dinner. And thinking about dinner at work brings different complications.

Another example Hathaway gives is buying and eating an ice cream cone. You first get the idea of the flavor and where to go to buy the ice cream. Then you could sit and eat and focus thoughts on the taste, texture, and pleasure of the ice cream. Or you could start to think that maybe you will want to buy another one

and whether you have enough money while the ice cream you are eating disappears into your mouth barely noticed.

Focus on relationships with adults and children is another aspect of her work. How we are with other people depends largely on how we are with our own bodies and minds.

"When we make friends with our emotions," Hathaway says, "we are happier and have greater peace of mind."

With practice, people can decide when they want to think and when they don't. We can choose to focus on the moment instead of allowing distracting thoughts to interrupt and complicate what is actually happening.

Hathaway uses the word "practice" in specific contexts of mindfulness, but her explanations of how to gain control of mind clutter

seem consistent with any person's efforts to learn healthful habits by repetition or practice. She says the idea is not to stop thinking but to focus thinking.

Her own life is full of demanding work from northern woods retreats for women to local workshops on "Mindfulness, Emotions & Eating" or "The Zen of Communication." She is on the board of trustees of the Morgan Bay Zendo in Surry.

By example, Hathaway demonstrates how focused thinking and mindfulness clear away brain clutter as much as Hart's own house shows the benefits of organized drawers and closets.

These women show us how we can reduce things and thoughts and still live with more than two plates on the shelf.

What is winter depression?

Do you experience increased moodiness and a marked decrease in energy throughout the winter months? You may be suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder, otherwise known as winter depression.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a pattern of depressive illness in which symptoms occur every winter. Research suggests that the pineal gland in the brain of some people is more highly sensitive to the loss of natural light (beginning when the days become shorter in the fall).

Usually peaking in January, this form of depressive illness is accompanied by a host of difficult reactions ranging from depression (and suicidal ideation in the most severe cases) to sluggishness, carbohydrate craving, or seeing everything in a negative light and interpreting the actions of others in the same negative light.

The most common symptoms of winter depression include extreme fatigue and lack of energy, increased need for sleep, sleeping much more than usual, carbohydrate craving and increased appetite, weight gain, low sex drive, feelings of persistent sadness, anxiety,

irritability, and improved mood on sunny days.

What treatments are available for those with winter depression?

Phototherapy—morning exposure to bright, full-spectrum light—can often be dramatically helpful for those suffering from SAD. As little as 30 minutes per day of sitting under a lightbox results in significant improvement in 60 to 80 percent of SAD patients. Other treatments for depression, including antidepressant medications and counseling, may also be helpful. Additionally, there is new research suggesting the use of the hormone melatonin to relieve winter depression.

People with milder symptoms of the "winter blahs" may be helped by simply spending more time outdoors and exercising regularly in the fall and winter.

If you think you suffer from SAD and want more information, consult your family physician.

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Betterment begins in the home

The hows and whys of communication

by Faith DeAmbrose

The family dynamic is one that is constantly in flux and as a result, research finds, there appears to be a decline in family interaction and a reduction in the ability to properly communicate. An increasing shift to one-parent households and two-parent working families in today's society often means families spend less time together and subsequently less time fostering communication skills. Studies regarding family interaction find that families who communicate in a healthy way are not only likely to have children who communicate effectively but are often more healthy overall.

"Trying to better oneself is an art form to be perfected over your lifetime," said Blue Hill psychotherapist Nancy Greene, who finds that communication is at the core of all relationships.

Teaching communication skills to children allows them a foundation to build upon, and Greene suggests that especially at an early age children need to feel that their opinions matter. Children need to be heard, but parents should always have the final say, continued Greene.

It is also true, especially in a family setting, that actions speak louder than words. This is because children learn their behaviors, beginning at infancy, from their parents and the world around them. The technical term for this is modeling, and its premise is that children learn through observation and from the actions of those around them. "Children learn more from what their parents model than from what they say," explained Greene.

Christine Talbott, a psychotherapist in Castine, also emphasized the importance of proper modeling within the family. To exemplify this concept, Talbott explained that if a parent punishes a child for lying and then the child catches the parent calling out sick from work (when they weren't sick), the child is going to be confused about lying.

Dealing with finite amounts of energy

Families have a finite amount of energy to expend each week, explained Talbott, who suggests families should examine where they spend that energy in order to assess where they may be losing it. Actions such as fighting, bickering or overextending oneself or family, she added, naturally detract from this energy and can impact the quality of life for the family members.

Talbott suggests that sometimes when a family is not functioning properly it is children who are most affected. "The child can be a thermometer for the rest of the family," explained Talbott, adding that children who act out at an early age may actually be saying that something is not functioning properly in the home.

Reducing and managing stress and setting realistic expectations within the family are also ways in which the family can be on the track to betterment, said Talbott, adding that too much scheduling for children is not constructive. "Children are not little adults and do not understand time management," she said. Also, when expectations "are higher than what children can developmentally handle, it can lead them to think they do not measure up," Talbott continued.

How to enact change and promote betterment

When negative behaviors become imbedded in a relationship—whether it is passed on from the previous generation or is the result of something new—the behaviors become normalized and can be difficult to change. Normalization, in a sociological sense, is the process by which behaviors are repeated to a point where they are accepted as being normal. These behaviors, explained Talbott, can be changed, but involve work

from the entire family. "If a family wants to make changes they have to own their behaviors and be willing to identify the patterns that need to be changed, make small changes and give the patterns time to normalize." According to Talbott, "It is easy to fall back and regress" to the old behaviors before the new ones have taken hold.

Communication in relationships

"In a relationship, it is important that we show up," said life coach Alfred DePew who also cites communication as an inherent weakness of any relationship. According to DePew, people need to be honest with themselves and with their partner and listen to the needs of their relationship in addition to the needs of the individuals within it.

What is often overlooked as a relationship ages, said DePew, is the dreaming that once took place in its earlier stages. Remembering what the original dreams of individuals and of a relationship once were is important, said DePew, and those dreams can be incorporated back into daily life.

Hanging out together and going on dates is just as important in the later years as it was in the earlier years, especially for couples with children who often forgot to have dates, said DePew.



Winning at the job/family challenge

Experts in the fields of psychology and personal effectiveness report that if you feel harried, frazzled, fragmented, or just plain uneasy about your lack of personal time, it's not only because you have too much to do. It's because you're not satisfied with most of what you do.

According to renowned leadership authority and teacher, Stephen Covey, PhD, the unsettling feeling so many people have—the dissatisfaction with our lives—exists because we are not spending enough time on the things that are most important to us.

In his book, *First Things First*, Covey explains that the key to living a meaningful life begins with determining what is most important in your life and then aligning the choices you make every day with those things you've determined are most important. Additionally, we need to shift our mindset from simply responding to what's "urgent" to a mindset of knowing and doing what is most important in our lives.

most important? What gives your life meaning? What do you want to be and do in your life?

"Clarity on these issues is critical," says Covey, "because it affects everything else in your life—the goals you set, the decisions you make, the way you spend your time."

The need for balance

If you don't think balance in your life is vitally important to your happiness, success and health, consider this: there is considerable evidence showing that mishandled stress at home interferes with work performance, and mismanaged on-the-job pressures create or magnify problems at home. Other research shows that the quality of personal relationships strongly influences job productivity, disease resistance and longevity. Conversely, people who value power over family and friendships appear to have a harder time fighting off disease.

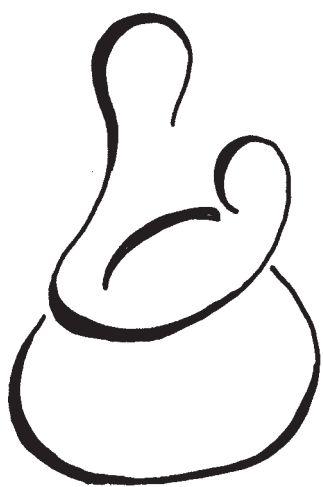
Ask yourself these questions: Can success in one area of your life compensate for failure in another? Can success in your profession compensate for a broken marriage or ruined health? Can success in the community justify failure as a parent?

Success or failure in any role you play contributes to the quality of every other role, and your life as a whole. Keep balance in your life. Identify your various roles and keep them right in front of you so that you don't neglect important areas such as your health, your family, professional preparation, or personal development. Evaluating your various roles and attaching a level of priority to each is another important step toward making more intelligent decisions on where to put your time and energy.

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First things first

Determine what is most important in your life. Ask yourself questions such as: What's



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Positive approach key to healthy self image

by Faith DeAmbrose

Self esteem—there is a lot of research out there about idealized image and the social pressures surrounding “measuring up” to what are often impossible representations of beauty. Studies show that girls’ self-esteem drops dramatically as they enter their adolescent years and that this phenomena does not occur in isolation.

Creating and maintaining a healthy self-image is important as one moves through life. Style coach Haydee Foreman of Blue Hill explains that a person should not capitulate to the cultural and media notions of beauty, but rather should capitalize on the natural assets that all of us possess.

“Looks do matter,” says Foreman, “as much as we would like to think they do not.” However, she explains, we should think of our looks simply as one of a number of non-verbal communication tools that all of us have in life’s toolbox. Looking good almost always makes a person feel good. “Catching a glimpse of ourselves when we look our best does affect our self-esteem and causes us to see ourselves in a different and positive light,” she adds.

Being positive is paramount to the process of maintaining a healthy self-image, and

accentuating one’s positive features rather than looking at a person’s perceived flaws is just what Foreman does as a style coach. “It’s not about size,” she explains, “it’s about self-care and saying to the world ‘I am worth taking good care of.’”

Although a style coach can go through your closet with you, tell you what your best colors are and help you bargain-shop, Foreman says it is not necessarily about “dressing up, it’s about understanding and accepting life on life’s terms and working with what you’ve got.”

So what can you do if a style coach is not in your budget? Foreman says find a friend who will be honest with you and take that friend to your closet for a fashion show. Try on everything in your closet and keep what looks good. Make alterations and repairs if necessary. Keep clothes that fit well because items that are either too small or too big are not flattering for anyone.

Then make a list of items that are needed to fill in the gaps in your closet. Foreman puts purchasing new undergarments on the top of things to do. “New undergarments make a difference in how items fit,” she says.

Also among the items that every woman should have in her closet: black pants, a white (or some variety of white depending on skin tone) shirt, and jackets “that fit around the largest part of a person and then are tailored (if needed).” Accessories are also must-haves and, according to Foreman, people often under-accessorize. Wearing a scarf, a long necklace or layering clothing items are fast and easy tips for fashion success.

In addition to boosting self-esteem, devoting time to pampering oneself also tends to be a stress reducer, says Foreman, who suggests that we incorporate calming rituals into our lives and reduce the amount of negative feedback we tend to give ourselves.



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Energy—how to have more of it

If you frequently find yourself wiped out by the end of the day, wondering where all of your energy went, wishing you had more, perhaps it’s time you start learning ways to increase your energy. To stay physically and mentally vigorous, you must give as much attention to your personal energy as you do any other area of your life.

Increasing your energy reserves

1. Eat a well-balanced diet. Anyone who relies on coffee and donuts for breakfast and fast food and a soft drink for lunch is bound to feel tired before the end of the day. Overeating—especially of calorie-laden refined or high-fat foods—also leads to sluggishness.

“Make sure you begin the day with some form of breakfast to break the fast the body has experienced overnight,” says nutrition consultant Patricia Conner, PhD.

“A breakfast high in complex carbohydrates is best because complex carbohydrates are the key to energy. I recommend whole-grain toast or that in combination with whole-grain cereal and some fruit.”

2. Enhance the quality of your sleep. Many people drag through each day because of nothing more complicated than a chronic sleep deficit. Sometimes it’s a matter of not spending enough hours in bed, but more often it’s the quality of sleep that’s the problem. If occasional sleeplessness troubles you, follow these simple suggestions:

- Stay away from stimulants such as coffee, tea, colas, and medications that contain caffeine, especially after 6 or 7 p.m. Note: It takes three hours for one cup of coffee to leave your system.
- Go to bed at the same time every night.
- Get regular, moderate exercise.
- Don’t use alcohol or sleeping pills to induce sleep. They typically produce light, unsettled sleep.

3. Exercise regularly. Exercise is the most important and readily available source of energy. If you find yourself

exhausted at day’s end, it’s far more likely to be caused by the mental and emotional pressures of the day, not physical exertion. A workout is the perfect antidote for combating tension and anxiety.

Many people with high-pressure jobs report feeling totally worn out by the end of the day. One such person recently stated, “When that happens, I drag myself home, change into my walking clothes and immediately go out and walk briskly for half an hour. It’s the last thing in the world I feel like doing, but I have a lot more energy after walking than I do before.” The reason for this is that the amount of energy created by exercise is greater than the amount of physical energy expended on it.

4. Avoid stimulants such as coffee, drugs or tobacco. Stimulants increase adrenal activity resulting in temporary energy highs that eventually will drop and leave you feeling tired.

5. Take some time out every day. Get away from your usual activities and relax in a peaceful setting for a short while. Some people find a program of regular yoga exercises or 20 minutes of meditation not only creates inner peace but also restores declining energy. Others swear by short naps or simply stretching out in bed listening to soft-playing music. Even a 10-minute timeout has the ability to energize you and make the rest of the day more fun and productive.

6. Take time for diversion. Everyone needs time for something different from the ordinary routines of life. Getting away from it all—whether you’re taking off to the Alps or the local park, for a month, a week or a day—can be very energizing as long as it provides a complete change.

Note: Chronic fatigue may be the first sign of a physical illness. If you have unexplained chronic fatigue, ask your physician for help.

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Resolutions: set priorities first to achieve realistic goals

by Alfred DePew

Here it is the end of January, and you have yet to visit the new gym you'd resolved to join. You've only been swimming once, and you'd meant to be swimming three times a week by now. So what happened? Life. Other stuff. Work.

Some people refuse to make New Year's resolutions because they never follow through and it's a setup to fail. The problem here is that we usually set intentions or goals in this season without taking the time to step into the bigger dreaming of our lives. We lose sight of the bigger picture and what our real priorities are.

How then do we get to what our priorities really are so we can set the goals we'll really strive to reach?

First of all, take a look at where you're spending your time, energy and money. Sit down with your day planner and really look at it. What did you schedule mostly? When? Were there times between scheduled events? Did you make time for your personal life? Your relationship? Examine your check register and your last credit card statement and

see what you spent money on. Notice where your money, time and energy are actually going. That's what you are making important in your life, whether you like it or not.

Next, take time to ask yourself what's really important in your life, the big picture—no kidding. Get real with yourself. Write these things down.

Then choose an area of your life you want to change, say health and fitness. Keeping the big picture of your life in mind, list what's important about this area. Take some time with this. The more words the better. "Flexibility" might speak more to you than the word "resilience," for example. What you're looking for here is language that resonates with you and carries the energy of the quality you're naming. I've come to believe in working with hundreds of clients over the last seven or eight years that these qualities and the language you use to point to them are a tremendous source of energy, and without an ongoing awareness of what's truly important to us, our best intentions come to nothing.

Next, ask yourself what you want to see

happen in this area of your life. You might want to feel better, lose weight, become stronger, have more stamina. What difference would this make in your life? What would be available to you if you had, say, more energy? What would be possible? Then move into some specifics. How much weight? By when? How would you know if you had more flexibility? In other words, what are some specific goals you want to set for yourself? And how will you know you've reached them? What actions are you willing to take?

Make a real commitment. Caution here: How do these goals fit into your actual life as it is now? Be reasonable without making yourself small. Ask yourself if you can really accomplish what you've committed to in the time frame you've given yourself. And if not, adjust accordingly.

Go for the easy wins at first. They count, and they can help build momentum for taking those bigger challenges.

Now tell someone else about your intention. If you've hired a coach, naturally you will tell him or her. But if you do not have a

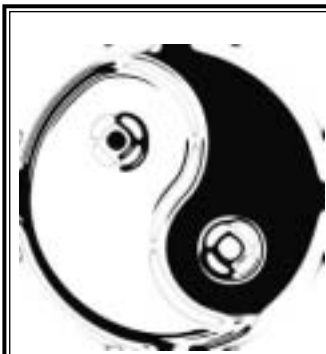
coach, choose someone who is willing to act as an accountability buddy. Let this person know exactly what you intend to do and the results you are looking for. Be specific. Then decide when you will check in with your buddy and make an appointment either to get together in person or by phone. Keep the appointment. Report on your progress. Invite your buddy to celebrate your success and hold you to your next intentions. Try this for six weeks or so, and see if it doesn't help you to stay on track with renewed energy and commitment as you make the changes you want to make in the life that you love.

Alfred DePew is certified by the International Coach Federation and focuses on leadership and relationship coaching. He lived in Maine for 26 years, taught at the Maine College of Art and was active in the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance. He started his coaching practice in Maine in 2000, working primarily with artists, writers and designers, and then physicians, educators, business owners, and political and civic leaders. He may be reached through his Web site, www.AlfredDePew.com.

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A local guide to medical and health services

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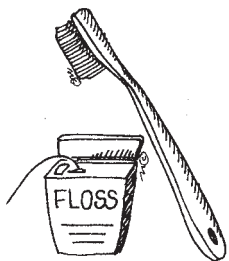
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Connect with community

Volunteering has health benefits

by Caroline Spear

A report issued by the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2007 finds that “volunteers help themselves to better health while helping others.”

“Researchers have attempted to measure the benefits that volunteers receive, including the positive feeling referred to as ‘helper’s high,’ increased trust in others, and increased social and political participation,” states the introduction to *The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research*.

According to a press release from the corporation, the review “has found a significant connection between volunteering and good health. The report shows that volunteers have greater longevity, higher functional ability, lower rates of depression and less incidence of heart disease.”

The review “documents major findings from more than 30 rigorous and longitudinal studies that reviewed the relationship between health and volunteering, with particular emphasis on studies that seek to determine the causal connection between the two factors. The studies, which were controlled for other factors, found that volunteering leads to improved physical and mental health.”

Two important findings are key: Older adults benefit more by volunteering and there are benefits for those who volunteer 100 hours or more a year.

The Corporation for National and Community Service also released *Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life* in 2007, which shows that “states with higher volunteer rates also have better health and that there is a significant statistical relationship between states with higher

volunteer rates and lower incidents of mortality and heart disease.”

The states are ranked using 12 indicators called the Civic Life Index; the indicators are grouped into four categories—volunteering for an organization, neighborhood engagement, voting, and civic and nonprofit infra-

**In 2006,
350,000 Mainers gave
42.4 million hours
of volunteer service.**

structure (the numbers of nonprofit groups in the state).

In 2006, Maine ranked ninth in the nation on the Civic Life Index and had the second-highest volunteer rate among Northeast states. According to the state trends report, more than 40 percent of people in Maine “engage in civic life by volunteering, working with their neighbors, or attending public meetings.”

In 2006, 350,000 Mainers gave 42.4 million hours of volunteer service, or 121 hours per volunteer per year. And, in addition to those volunteers, another 34,000 worked with their neighbors to improve their communities.

Maine volunteer hours are spent primarily in education or youth service (30.4 percent) and social or community service (16.7 percent). In every age group, from 16 to over 65, Mainers exceeded the national rate of volunteering.

What you can do

Think “community” when you think of volunteering—and think of something you like to do.

There is a wealth of opportunity in our own communities. Contact the schools, hospital, food banks, libraries, or Scouts, for example.

Read the Giving Guide section of the Bay Community Register and the local newspaper for ideas. Ask around; someone you speak with may know of a need.

Volunteering doesn’t have to be an organized activity. Look around your neighborhood. Does an older person need help with clearing snow or mowing the lawn or making a trip to the dump? Does trash need to be

cleared from the ditches on your road?

Getting involved in civic organizations, attending the selectmen’s meetings, and voting in each election all involve you in the life of your town.

From what the studies show, you as a whole being—and your health—will benefit.

The reports cited in this article are available at www.nationalservice.gov. The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for more than 2 million Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America. For more information, visit www.nationalservice.gov.

Be fit, happy and healthy

Exercise has a positive effect on mood

by Sandy Buxton

Though we may not think about it, “exercise” has a vastly different connotation today than it did 80 to 100 years ago. In 2008 we must “work” at exercise and try to remain vigilant about our daily fitness routines in order to get or stay healthy and in shape. In 1908 “fitness and exercise” were not bantered about in conversations, nor even recognized as such. The work of daily existence was the exercise, the health regime. Cardio and aerobics, muscle toning, strong bones, and deep breathing came naturally from the hard and never-ending work of providing for home and family every day.

What does remain the same is the emotional and mental satisfaction that comes from a good day’s physical work or the exertion of a good exercise routine. Moving, stretching, and flexing the body in ways that work best for each individual can help create and maintain a very healthy emotional, mental and physical balance.

Some find their best health routine in solitude and working out alone. For many others, the camaraderie and support found in a class setting or with an exercise partner boost their outlook and self-esteem, creating a great recipe for lasting success. Often, just the social aspect of exercise, whether it be aerobics, Pilates, or yoga class, etc., is reason enough to get out and move. Many people who participate regularly in a fitness or movement group cite the fun and mood-lifting aspect of “groaning and toning” with folks seeking similar goals as the glue that keeps them dedicated to staying healthy.

Whether solo or social, working out at home or at a fitness facility, the physical rewards of a regular exercise routine include greater circulation, stronger bones, improved muscle tone and balance, and increased energy and metabolism. A healthier body, like a well-maintained engine, allows us to work, or play, more effectively.

Continued on page 8

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A local guide to medical and health services continued

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Exercise

Continued from page 7

tively and at more satisfying levels. This, then, allows you to feel more positive and happier about your abilities and even your looks. Your enthusiasm increases and off you go to accomplish more and more! Who knows, perhaps feeling more positive for the long-term effects of getting fit can lead you to greater skills at work, or in sports, or even trying a brand new sport, job, or craft. So, in general, it appears that exercising your body also exercises your brain,

which works together toward a happier, less limited, more fulfilled lifestyle.

In a recent health article in *U.S. News and World Report*, medical researchers have begun to point fingers at the often isolating, sedentary, indoor lifestyle of the recent "computer culture." Sitting through work and leisure time is emerging as the culprit of increasing depression disorders, particularly in young adults. The good news is that evidence suggests that regular, vigorous exercise has a positive effect on mood. Research is beginning to show that burning off 350 calories three times a week in sus-

tained, sweat-inducing activity can significantly ease depression. According to current research, a good fitness routine three or more times per week appears to be about as effective as antidepressants in treating certain mood disorders.

It looks like we need to "lighten up," literally and figuratively. Lessen the load, both physically and emotionally. Whether you prefer to exercise alone or with others—keep at it any way you can. If you aren't currently exercising, start any way you can. There are many, many innovative ways to get moving more. And lastly, remember to have fun with whatever you do.

Laughing and smiling more with any activity actually increases the oxygen flow and helps you feel even better. Move for the joy of being able to move, not just because your medical provider told you to. As with any improvement or healing process, "attitude is everything!" So, be fit, be happy, be healthy. After all, why not?

Sandy Buxton of Deer Isle is a certified personal trainer, fitness class instructor, founder of the first fitness center on Deer Isle, and has spent 10 years helping Island people become and stay fit. She currently teaches eight to 10 fitness classes each week.

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Cutting your food budget

Prepare what food you can at home

by **Caroline Spear**

Our busy lives sometimes mean that we rely on convenience foods to save time in the kitchen when preparing meals for our families. But relying on convenience, or pre-packaged foods, such as frozen dinners or canned goods, can mean that we are spending more money on food than we need to and eating less healthfully.

"A good rule is that the more food is prepared by someone else, the more you pay for it," according to the University of Maine Extension bulletin *Cutting Food Costs*. "Additional packaging also adds costs to convenience food. Convenience food may also be precooked or have seasonings, sauces, or toppings that raise the price. Unfortunately, convenience foods are often high in unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium."

Another reason to avoid prepared foods is that someone in your family may be sensi-

tive or allergic to additives such as preservatives, coloring and taste enhancers.

According to the Cooperative Extension, preparing as much food at home as you can is much easier on your budget. You can save time by planning for leftovers so you don't have to cook a meal from scratch every night.

Plan a menu for the week, make a list from it, and stick to that list at the grocery store. Compare prices using the unit pricing labels on the store shelves, use coupons, and above all don't shop when you're hungry—it's too easy to give in to temptation.

You may find that some convenience foods are within your budget if they are on sale or if their convenience outweighs the time you would spend to make the same food at home.

Remember, though, as the Extension office notes, "Buy what your family will eat.

A sale item is no bargain if your family doesn't like it."

For example, does your family eat a lot of carrot sticks? Purchasing "baby" carrots can be expensive. Someone else has done the work for you by peeling and shaping regular carrots. You could, instead, buy a bag of regular carrots for much less money, peel and cut them up yourself, and store them tightly covered in the refrigerator. The time involved isn't much and you've saved money.

You can also make your own convenience mixes such as those for biscuits and other bread products, cocoa, seasonings and more. Extension Bulletin #4029, *Saving Money with Homemade Convenience Mixes*, and many others, are available to download free or purchase at www.umext.maine.edu/.

Whether you are preparing convenience mixes or a whole meal, you control the quality of the ingredients and can make substitutions to reduce fat and sodium so the food is healthier for you.

What does that mean?

Fat-free: Less than 0.5 grams per serving

Low saturated fat: 1 gram or less per serving and 15 percent or less of calories from saturated fat

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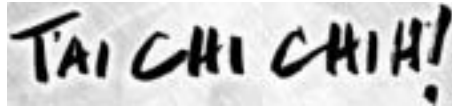
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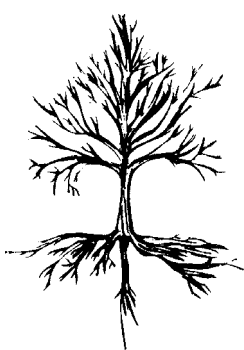
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Fat-free is not calorie-free

Make wise food choices

by **Caroline Spear**

If you think foods labeled low-fat or fat-free mean no calories and license to eat as much of them as you like, then think again.

According to the Weight-control Information Network, part of the National Institutes of Health, "A low-fat or fat-free food is often lower in calories than the same size portion of the full-fat product. But many processed low-fat or fat-free foods have just as many calories as the full-fat version of the same food—or even more calories. They may contain added sugar, flour, or starch thickeners to improve flavor and texture after fat is removed. These ingredients add calories."

A calorie is a calorie, no matter the source, and many reduced-fat foods are nearly equal in calories to the same serving of full-fat foods and thus may not help you lose weight. Some examples provided by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, also part of

the National Institutes of Health, are:

- Peanut butter, 2 tablespoons—reduced-fat, 187 calories; regular, 191 calories.
- Vanilla ice cream, 1/2 cup—light (7 percent fat), 111 calories; regular (11 percent fat), 133 calories.
- Tortilla chips, 1 ounce—baked, 113 calories; regular, 143 calories.
- Chocolate chip cookies, three cookies (30 grams)—reduced-fat, 118 calories; regular, 142 calories.

The advantage to reduced-fat foods often lies in the reduction of saturated fats in the lower-fat version. Low-fat cheese, extra-lean beef and low-fat milk are good examples of foods where the low-fat version reduces one's intake of saturated fats, which contribute to low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Dietary Guidelines for Americans states, "Fats and oils are part of a healthful diet, but the type of fat makes a difference to heart health and the total amount of fat consumed is also important," since a high intake of sat-

urated fats, *trans* fats and cholesterol contribute to heart disease. Major sources of *trans* fats are packaged cakes, cookies, crackers and bread, animal products and margarine.

What you can do to control your fat intake

First, and perhaps most important, check the serving size. Are you eating the recommended serving? Foods in smaller packages may appear to be one portion but are often more than that. A 99¢ bag of potato chips, for instance, is usually two portions. When you eat more than one serving, you are increasing the amount of fat and calories you consume.

Read the "Nutrition Facts" label that appears on most packaged foods (see chart on how to read the label in this issue). It will tell you how much total fat is in one serving and will detail the amount of saturated and *trans* fat as well. Compare brands and select foods with the lowest amounts of these fats. To help lower cholesterol, the Dietary Guidelines recommend that you avoid satu-

rated and *trans* fats and replace them with the more heart-healthy polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats found in fish, nuts and liquid vegetable oils.

Add more grain products, preferably whole grains, to your diet. They're naturally low in fat, unless it is added in processing, and, because they are high in fiber, can help you feel full while eating fewer calories.

Make sensible choices, such as these recommended by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: water-packed tuna instead of oil-packed; pasta with red sauce instead of pasta with Alfredo sauce; chicken or turkey without skin; baked fish instead of fried fish; light mayonnaise; jelly or jam on toast instead of butter.

More information on making wise choices in what you eat can be found at these Web sites:

- Dietary Guidelines for Americans: www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines
- Weight-control Information Network: <http://win.niddk.nih.gov>
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

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A local guide to medical and health services continued

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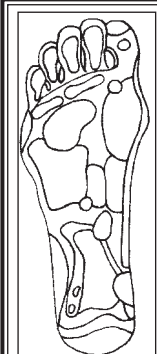
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The ABCs of nutrition

Dietary Guidelines for Americans, issued by and updated every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, offer 10 guidelines “grouped into the ABCs of nutrition” as follows:

A. Aim for fitness

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.

B. Build a healthy base

- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices (see end of article).

- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Keep food safe to eat.

C. Choose sensibly

- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

MyPyramid Food Guidance System

To help consumers follow the Dietary Guidelines, the USDA has developed the MyPyramid Food Guidance System. The system “translates nutritional recommendations into the kinds and amounts of food to eat each day” and is available at www.mypyramid.gov.

There you’ll find the MyPyramid Tracker, an easy-to-use online assessment of your diet and physical activity. Among many available features are steps to take to reach a healthier weight, tips and resources.

MyPyramid tips

- Make half your grains whole
- Vary your veggies
- Focus on fruit
- Get your calcium rich foods
- Go lean with protein
- Find your balance between food and physical activity

Food label information helps you to make healthy choices

The “Nutrition Facts” label found on most food packaging is there, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, to allow consumers “to make quick, informed food choices that contribute to a healthy diet.” Learning to use the information on the label

lets you compare brands and choose foods that are lower in calories, fat, sodium and cholesterol.

The following chart is produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

There are seven key areas of the label:

- Serving size
- Calories
- Nutrients
- Fats and sodium
- Carbohydrates
- Protein
- % Daily Value

Each area described in the chart gives you tips and information to eat healthy. Much more information is available at www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

USE THE NUTRITION FACTS LABEL TO EAT HEALTHIER

Check the serving size and number of servings.

- The Nutrition Facts Label information is based on ONE serving, but many packages contain more. Look at the serving size and how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories and nutrients, including the % DVs.
- When you compare calories and nutrients between brands, check to see if the serving size is the same.

Calories count, so pay attention to the amount.

- This is where you’ll find the number of calories per serving and the calories from fat in each serving.
- Fat-free doesn’t mean calorie-free. Lower fat items may have as many calories as full-fat versions.
- If the label lists that 1 serving equals 3 cookies and 100 calories, and you eat 6 cookies, you’ve eaten 2 servings, or twice the number of calories and fat.

Look for foods that are rich in these nutrients.

- Use the label not only to limit fat and sodium, but also to increase nutrients that promote good health and may protect you from disease.
- Some Americans don’t get enough vitamins A and C, potassium, calcium, and iron, so choose the brand with the higher % DV for these nutrients.
- Get the most nutrition for your calories—compare the calories to the nutrients you would be getting to make a healthier food choice.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 **Calories from Fat 110**

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 12g 18%

Saturated Fat 3g 15%

Trans Fat 3g

Cholesterol 30mg 10%

Sodium 470mg 20%

Potassium 700mg 20%

Total Carbohydrate 31g 10%

 Dietary Fiber 0g 0%

 Sugars 5g

Protein 5g

Vitamin A 4%

Vitamin C 2%

Calcium 20%

Iron 4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

The % Daily Value is a key to a balanced diet.

The % DV is a general guide to help you link nutrients in a serving of food to their contribution to your total daily diet. It can help you determine if a food is high or low in a nutrient—5% or less is low, 20% or more is high. You can use the % DV to make dietary trade-offs with other foods throughout the day. The * is a reminder that the % DV is based on a 2,000-calorie diet. You may need more or less, but the % DV is still a helpful gauge.

Know your fats and reduce sodium for your health.

- To help reduce your risk of heart disease, use the label to select foods that are lowest in saturated fat, *trans* fat and cholesterol.
- *Trans* fat doesn’t have a % DV, but consume as little as possible because it increases your risk of heart disease.
- The % DV for total fat includes all different kinds of fats.
- To help lower blood cholesterol, replace saturated and *trans* fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats found in fish, nuts, and liquid vegetable oils.
- Limit sodium to help reduce your risk of high blood pressure.

Reach for healthy, wholesome carbohydrates.

- Fiber and sugars are types of carbohydrates. Healthy sources, like fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains, can reduce the risk of heart disease and improve digestive functioning.
- Whole grain foods can’t always be identified by color or name, such as multi-grain or wheat. Look for the “whole” grain listed first in the ingredient list, such as whole wheat, brown rice, or whole oats.
- There isn’t a % DV for sugar, but you can compare the sugar content in grams among products.
- Limit foods with added sugars (sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn or maple syrup), which add calories but not other nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals. Make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few items in the ingredients list.

For protein, choose foods that are lower in fat.

- Most Americans get plenty of protein, but not always from the healthiest sources.
- When choosing a food for its protein content, such as meat, poultry, dry beans, milk and milk products, make choices that are lean, low-fat, or fat free.



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