‘Feeling good’ may be best New Year’s resolution

Story by Chris Halagarda,
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CS1 Adam Decle from *USS Curtis Wilber (DDG54)* enjoys the view of the waterfront while exercising on the treadmill in the MWR Cardio Room located on the fourth floor of the James D. Kelly Fleet Recreation Center Jan 11. For many Americans, It’s that time of year to declare New Year’s resolutions such as exercising, eating right and losing weight.

Photo by Jeffrey C. Doepp

FORT LEE, Va. – For many Americans, it’s that time of year to declare New Year’s resolutions. Unfortunately, too many people have previously made the decision to start exercising, eat right and lose weight as a resolution but have failed. If you have made those resolutions in the past, ask yourself what went wrong.

Over the years, it has been my experience when talking with thousands of people about nutrition and fitness, chances are they probably “bit off more than they could chew.” Meaning: They set up unrealistic goals. Maybe you said you would go to the fitness center every day, never eat cookies or cake again, or even eliminate soda from the diet.

But what you really need to do is set more specific goals such as: I will go to the fitness center or exercise at home at least three times each week. I will allow myself two cookies twice a week; or, I will have one soft drink a week. Be specific and realistic.

The other important change to make is to try to change your mindset about fat loss and exercise. For instance, rather than focusing on the way you look, focus on how you feel. With a healthier diet and increasing the intake of essential nutrients, your energy levels will increase. The increase in “feel good” hormones will make you feel better and allow you to be more productive at work and at home.

This year, try making small changes to your lifestyle that will make you feel better and, most likely, you’ll start to look better, too. You can get started today by adding one or two of these ideas to your life:

Add fruits and vegetables. Promise yourself you will eat five servings of fruit and vegetables at least four days each week. By eating all the fiber and water in fruits and vegetables, you should eat less food the rest of the day and hopefully lose weight. Worst case is that you don’t lose weight, but you will be more hydrated and energized from all the additional vitamins and minerals you’re eating.

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Drink tea. Green tea, black tea, herbal tea – whatever tea you like – just drink a cup of tea or two at least four days per week. Teas are loaded with antioxidants, flavanoids, vitamins and minerals and may help prevent tumors and promote weight loss. More research needs to be done to identify all of the benefits from drinking tea, but we know that it’s healthier than soda and can promote weight loss.

Spice it up! Don’t let a meal go by without sprinkling some type of herb or spice on it. Sprinkle cinnamon on oatmeal, garlic powder on salads, paprika on hummus and chili powder, onion, pepper, dry mustard and cayenne in chili. Don’t hesitate to try new spices. There are so many great flavors with so many health benefits. Best of all, most spices don’t have any calories! Before you go grocery shopping at the commissary, find a recipe with a spice that you’ve never tried before and give it a try.

Drink more water. Aim for about half your body weight in fluid ounces each day. If you weigh 120 pounds, you should consume about 60 fluid ounces of water per day. Keep in mind, water-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, soups and teas will also increase this total, and high levels of physical activity will increase daily fluid needs above this amount. Just staying well-hydrated will make you feel more energized. Don’t forget to drink fluids in the winter, too. We still lose a lot of fluid even when it’s cooler outside.

Add steps. If you can’t bear the thought of going to a fitness center and walking or running on a treadmill, get a pedometer and shoot for 10,000 steps a day. If you find that 10,000 steps are way too many for you to start with, opt for a more practical approach. Start by recording how many steps you take for seven days; divide that total by seven and try to go above and beyond that number each day. For example, if you average 5,000 steps a day, try to reach 5,500 steps every day of the following week; then 6,000 steps the next week. Ultimately, you want to achieve and maintain at least 10,000 steps each day.

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