



For Information Contact:

Lydia Sermons-Ward, 703-907-8640

press@psych.org

Jessica Mikulski, 703-907-8562

jmikulski@psych.org

Embargoed until:

January 3, 2007

Release No. 07-03

Successful New Year's Resolutions

Arlington, Va. – January 1 is not only the start of the New Year, but it is when many people make their New Year's Resolutions. Manage stress. Eat healthier. Exercise more. Spend more time with family. Sticking to your resolutions and making changes can be difficult, but it's not impossible. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) offers tips and other resources to help families and individuals keep their resolutions for a healthy mind and healthy life.

“New Year's is a great opportunity for people of all ages to reflect back on their accomplishments and set goals for the future,” said Thomas Wise, M.D., who is chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Inova Fairfax Hospital, professor of psychiatry at George Washington University School of Medicine, and chair of the APA's Council on Psychosomatic Medicine. “It is important to set realistic expectations so that you can feel a sense of accomplishment and make progressive steps in your life.”

- **Try again.** Everyone has made – and broken – past resolutions. That does not mean that you won't succeed this time. Start with a positive approach, including thinking about what has disrupted your good intentions in the past. Don't discourage yourself with a negative outlook.
- **Don't make too many resolutions.** Trying to eat better, exercise more, quit smoking, and reduce stress is too much to tackle at once. Pick a realistic, attainable goal with a reasonable time frame.
- **Choose your own resolution.** Make sure this is something that you want to accomplish for yourself and not for friends or family. When you attain the goal they will benefit from your success as well.
- **Make a plan and write it down.** Plan what you'd like to accomplish in three or six months. Achieving small goals over time gives you a sense of accomplishment and motivation to keep going. Writing your goals down is a good way to keep track of your progress.
- **Involve friends and family.** They can support your efforts and can motivate you to keep going. Setting a personal goal is not a “promise” which can never be broken. Don't paint yourself into a corner by overstating what can be a realistic change you plan to make.
- **Forgive yourself.** If you get off track, don't think that you failed. Review your plan and make adjustments.
- **Congratulate yourself.** Reward yourself when your intermediate goals or resolutions are met. But be careful that your reward doesn't work against what you are trying to achieve; for example, don't eat a large meal when you have lost five pounds or don't have “just one cigarette” when you're quitting smoking.

The most important consideration when making resolutions is to decide if you are truly willing to make the change in your life. Deciding to make a change just to have a resolution will not keep you motivated to attain your goal. Many people fail because they are afraid or don't fully realize how the goal can benefit their every day lives. When you decide on your resolution, make a plan of action and list the ways it will improve your life. When you can see the prize, you are more likely to keep up the fight.

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 37,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.