

# Harden Your Resolve

BY SANDY MAYNARD

Begin working on your resolution now, and, by the New Year, you'll be well on your way to a new you.



It's easy enough to make a resolution—following through for the rest of the year is the challenge. My best advice for ADDers: Don't impose a time frame on change. Waiting until January 1st is just an acceptable form of procrastination, which most of us are already too good at. Likewise, don't be discouraged if January's nearly over. There are 11 more months in a year, and it's never too late to start.

## Start now

Most New Year's resolutions are about making a life change. Look at change as a gradual process, and it becomes clear that there's no one right time to start. Begin today by choosing one thing you know you can do. It may be eating an apple instead of a bag of chips, or taking a walk instead of watching TV. Whatever it is, it will make you feel good, and it will start you on the path toward change.

## Three levels of change

Making modifications at each of the following three levels improves the likeli-

hood of success in keeping New Year's resolutions and making a change that lasts.

**ENVIRONMENTAL:** The easiest changes you can make involve your surroundings. Throw out the junk food you have in your home, or join a gym, or purchase new running shoes. These sorts of changes are easy to do and will improve the likelihood of success, but they're not enough. Wearing cycling gear does not make you a cyclist. You need to move to the next level of change, which is behavioral.

**BEHAVIORAL:** Changing your behavior, i.e., not buying the chips in the first place, is a little more difficult. For this you need

a strategy. And for a strategy to work for individuals with AD/HD, it needs to be exciting, fun, interesting, or easy—or all of the above. If your resolution is to exercise, but you hate to run, DON'T. Play a sport, or take up yoga. If one thing begins to bore you, switch to another. You can be a jack-of-all-sports and master of none. It's still exercise.

All change requires that you be ready, willing, and able. If you are ready and willing, but not able, consult others or join a club to find out how to get started. If you're ready and able, but not willing,

## QUICK TIP ▶

Get a "partner in crime." They say that sharing misery cuts it in half and sharing joy doubles it. If your New Year's resolution involves making an extremely difficult change, such as quitting smoking, join a group. Those who have struggled with quitting know what it is like and will be a source of support.

## QUICK TIP ▶

Changing a behavior may require learning a new skill. If you don't take a tennis lesson, you may never find out how to get the most out of it. Ask healthy friends how they avoid buying chips. See a nutritionist to develop a manageable schedule of healthy meals. Learn how to start off on the right foot, and then go for it!

you simply won't do anything. And that's where motivation comes in.

**BELIEFS AND VALUES:** This is the most difficult area to change. If you believe you can do something, you will. Likewise, if you think you aren't smart enough or strong enough to accomplish what you want to do, you won't even try. You may think, "I'll never get organized" or "I'll always be late." Fact: There are organized individuals with AD/HD. Fact: There are punctual individuals with AD/HD.

First, identify a limiting belief ("I don't have time to exercise") or a limiting value ("Work must come first"). Ask yourself questions, such as:

▶ What is the best-case scenario based on my old value?

- ▶ Is this belief always true?
- ▶ How will this new belief change me?

Continue the process by figuring out what you'd rather believe in. Slowly, you should see a new belief or a new value emerging: "I have time to exercise in the afternoons." "Family must come first, work, second."

## Keep it going

Now that you've started, you need to keep going for the rest of the year. Here are some suggestions for staying motivated:

▶ **Put it in writing.** Write a new belief at the top of a piece of paper, and list the advantages of the new behavior below it. Every time your motivation flags, read the list. Make copies of it to post in key places.

▶ **See the big picture.** If it's time for your run, but it's raining outside, visualize yourself as strong and confident, running in the cool, refreshing rain. Do NOT visualize yourself as cold and uncomfortable, or you won't even put your sneakers on.

▶ **Talk the talk.** If you notice yourself saying, "This is too hard. This isn't worth it," to yourself or to others—stop. Keep your

self-talk positive, no matter how uncomfortable it may feel in the beginning.

▶ **Give it some thought.** Rationalization is the enemy. We have all become too good at convincing ourselves that we don't have time to exercise or that junk food is our only option. Baloney! If you don't have time for the gym, take a brisk, 10-minute walk. Try the salad or other healthy options that most fast-food restaurants now offer.

To make your New Year's resolution a reality, you have to attack it on all fronts. Start slowly, but start today. Stop making excuses, and start believing in yourself. Make changes in your environment, your behavior, and your beliefs, and you'll soon see—and feel—the change in yourself.

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### Did you make change stick?

Send your tips on forming new habits or behaviors to *ADDitude*, 39 West 37th Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10018 or e-mail [letters@additudemag.com](mailto:letters@additudemag.com).