



NEW YEAR FOCUS

Local trainers share tips
to keep you on track
with your 2020 health goals

Jeremy Williams

I F YOU ARE LOOKING TO MAKE some changes in your life now that we're in 2020, you are not alone. Making a New Year resolution is as American as apple pie, baseball or any other U.S.A. cliché you can think of. In fact, according to a YouGov survey, nearly seven out of 10 people make some sort of New Year resolution for themselves as they say goodbye to the past year and look ahead to becoming a more focused and determined person.

Each year, the list of the most popular resolutions include spending less money, quitting smoking, getting more sleep and spending more time with family. However, the resolution that tops every list and survey is losing weight.

Several surveys even indicate that nearly half of all New Year resolutions are to lose weight or get in shape. Unfortunately, if you are one of those people the surveys have some not so great numbers for you. The U.S. News & World Report states that about 80% of people who resolve to lose weight give up by mid-February and a study by researchers at the University of Scranton found that almost a quarter of those give up after the first week.

While those numbers can sound discouraging, have no fear because we are here to help. We spoke to personal trainers, fitness coaches and nutrition experts in Central Florida and Tampa Bay to collect information

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and tips for you to stay on track with your health and fitness goals.

The information on the subsequent pages are broken up into the two categories we all know are the main focus to getting healthy, fit and losing weight: exercise and eating right.

While our advice comes from fitness and nutrition specialists, make sure to check with your healthcare provider before starting any new health goals.

FITNESS

Yep, if you want to lose weight this year you are going to have to get more physical. Below are a few tips to help keep you motivated as you run toward that healthier you.

BE SURE TO SET S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

“The first thing you want to do is set yourself up for success and the only way you can do that is by figuring out what it is you want to accomplish,” says Austin Hickey, a fitness coach at Hell’s Bells Performance Training in St. Petersburg. “Whenever I start working with a new client I tell them that their goals must be S.M.A.R.T.”

S.M.A.R.T. stands for Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed.

Hickey says most people come in to him with a goal that is set too broadly. Be specific.

“You can say I want to lose 50 pounds this year,” he says, “but there’s not really a process or framework that’s going to help you get there.”

A better way to set your goals is to have them be more specific and focused on the process rather than the end result.

“Instead of an arbitrary number of pounds to lose, maybe your New Year resolution should be to go to the gym three times a week,” Hickey says.

That brings us to our next step: make your goal measureable.

While you can track your progress by how much weight you are losing, doing so can be misleading as your weight will fluctuate as you develop muscle and lose fat. Hickey says measuring by the number of days you plan to dedicate to fitness or the number of exercises you plan to do with each work out will be easier to track and keep you in a more positive mindset.



SMART OPTIONS: Brenda Fikry is a registered dietitian, certified exercise physiologist and the owner of St. Petersburg Nutrition. PHOTO BY DYLAN TODD

Next you want to make sure that your fitness goals are achievable.

“Setting a goal to get fit so you can run in a marathon is a great goal, but not if the marathon is in a month,” Hickey says. “If you come out of left field with an unattainable goal like losing 100 pounds by March then you are not going to stick with it.”

Try and be realistic with your goals. You didn’t put the weight on in one week so don’t go in thinking you will lose it in one week. Think realistically and be honest with yourself.

“Everyone expects instant results,” says Max Dunley, fitness trainer and owner of Rock Hard Fitness in Orlando. “Nowadays, you order something on Amazon and it’s here the next day. I tell my clients if you can make it to the third month, then you’ll see. Most people will diet for three days and they’ll be like, ‘I haven’t lost 20 pounds yet.’ It’s a process, it’s consistency. It’s not going to happen in the course of a week or a month.”

You also want to give yourself plenty of time to reach your goals.

“With the new year, people will get psyched up about getting fit, and that’s great, but they will try and go from doing nothing for years to being in the gym seven days a week,” says Zach Rochette, a personal trainer with Rock Hard Fitness. “They do that for one week, get burnt out and then they don’t step back into the gym for the rest of the year. Ease yourself into it.”

Being S.M.A.R.T. about your goals isn’t just about crossing the finish line, it’s the education you gain along the way.

“You’re going to learn more from the process than you will from getting to the end result and that will be the most beneficial thing for you,” Hickey says. “That knowledge is going to help you maintain a healthy lifestyle once you reach your goal.”

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Achieving your fitness goals are easier if you have the right support around you and people who have the knowledge to get you where

you want to be, especially if you are an individual getting back into working out after being away from the gym for years.

“A lot of people say they want to lose weight as their New Year resolution but don’t go to where the education is,” says Jacklyn Tippet, another personal trainer with Rock Hard Fitness. “They go to these big name gyms, get a membership for \$30 or \$40 a month and they have no guidelines or process to put you on the right track to be successful. You’re just supposed to go in and figure it out.”

Tippet says getting a trainer, coach or mentor who can set you up on a game plan and hold you accountable can be the difference between following through and giving up. If one-on-one attention isn’t something you are a fan of or is outside of your finances, look into signing up for classes.

“Joining a bootcamp gym where you have a class that guides you through a workout so you don’t have to go in and guess exercises to do is a fantastic way to stay on track,” Tippet says.

Bootcamp, yoga and Zumba classes tend to be less expensive than getting a personal trainer and some gyms include exercise classes as a part of the membership. Classes also come with a built-in community and will keep you more accountable as it is a scheduled appointment.

You can also use your gym as a way to meet people and make new friends who are in the same boat as you.

“Look throughout the community and find friends who are working toward similar goals as you are,” Hickey says. “Nothing is more motivating than feeling like you are being left out of what the group is doing. Friends will help keep you going to the gym and help hold you accountable.”

Let your friends and family know what your resolutions are as well. While some of them may not be going to the gym with you they can offer you support and encouragement during those

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HEALTHY CHOICES: Members at Hell's Bells Performance Training in St. Petersburg use medicine balls during workout (1). Trainers Zach Rochette, Jacklyn Tippett, Ben Windle and Ashleigh Woodruff (2-5) demonstrate several exercises on the various pieces of equipment available at Rock Hard Fitness in Orlando. PHOTO 1 COURTESY OF HELL'S BELLS, PHOTOS 2-5 BY DYLAN TODD

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times when you feel like the results aren't coming fast enough.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

Let's face it, most people don't like going to the gym and working out. Sure there are those who claim to love it and more so people who feel great once they get there, but the thought of repetitively running on a treadmill or lifting weights for an hour each day can sound mind-numbingly dull to some, especially if you are just getting into it.

Along with the before mentioned classes, your work out can just as easily be found outside of a gym.

"Working out can be about more than just getting healthy, use it as an excuse to learn new skills or try something different," Hickey says. "Go hiking, take up paddle boarding, go swimming; get outside of the gym and use your fitness and health in other ways."

Joining a sports league is a great way to get your fitness

on outside of the typical gym workout and helps build a community for yourself. Central Florida and Tampa Bay has several LGBTQ-specific leagues including softball, dodgeball and kickball, just to name a few.

EXERCISE AROUND YOUR BUSY LIFE

According to our trainers, the biggest reason people give up on their fitness goals is they say they are too busy. Even if you are an on-the-go, busy 24/7 kind of person, you can still get some sort of exercise into your day.

"Almost anything you do to move your body is better than sitting and eating lunch at a desk," says Rochette. "You don't have to go into a side room and do jump squats and mountain climbers on your breaks, but if you go outside for a 15-minute walk, maybe eat while you're walking, stuff like that will make a difference."

Other suggestions to get exercise into your day include taking the stairs instead of elevators, keeping a single dumbbell in your desk drawer and using it for a couple of minutes

several times a day and for every 30 minutes you sit getting up and moving for two minutes.

The most important tip that came from every trainer, if you have a job that keeps you immobile for any lengthy amount of time, make sure to stretch throughout the day.

"Most people with a desk job, their mobility is crap," Dunley says. "If you don't have mobility, you're not going to be able to move anything properly. If you want to counteract sitting at a desk for a prolonged period of time, get those ankles moving, get those hips moving, stretch, stretch, stretch."

Dunley also recommends if you are someone who is too busy during the day and after work to get a workout in, try to get into the habit of getting up early and doing it before you start your day.

"I'll tell people it's hard for me to work out after 9 or 10 a.m. because the phone starts ringing, your day gets started and things start weighing you down," he says. "For me, at the end of the day I'm stressed out and I just want to go home and eat my feelings. First

thing in the morning, get it out of the way. Don't look at work emails, just set that alarm clock and show up."

NUTRITION

The second part in your one-two punch to a healthier you is all about what you are eating. Below are tips from nutritional experts to help you get that healthy body without getting rid of all the flavor.

JOURNAL YOUR PROGRESS

The main reason so many fail in eating right and being healthy is that they lose track of what they are eating throughout the day.

"I think the best way for anyone to get started with a healthier diet is by keeping a food journal," says Brenda Fikry, a registered dietitian, certified exercise physiologist and owner of St. Petersburg Nutrition. "Try it for a week or so at first, and pay attention to what your body is telling you."

Fikry says as you document your eating habits don't just record what foods you consumed. You want to include what you ate, how much you ate, what time of

day you ate and, most importantly, how your body felt.

"Maybe you felt bloated, maybe as you approached a meal you were feeling irritated, maybe your energy was real low on a certain day. After a while you will start to make connections," she says. "Are you eating too much in the evening because you go too long between lunch and dinner? Do you need to add a snack time in somewhere? Are you taking in more calories too close to bedtime? Once you journal enough you can start to set small goals for yourself that will help you to succeed."

DO YOUR RESEARCH

The biggest obstacle to overcome when it comes to eating right is knowing what information is accurate out there.

"The reality is out of any industry on the entire planet, the most saturated one and the one with the most false news is definitely nutrition," says Ben Windle, fitness trainer and head nutrition coach at Rock Hard Fitness. "You have people that are

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spewing horrible misinformation, trying to sell you nutrition programs when in reality all you need to understand is the basics of losing weight. Simply put, just put yourself in a calorie deficit."

Windle suggests, in order to lose weight at a healthy rate, that your calorie deficit should be between 200-500 calories. The reduction should be based on the amount of calories you would normally eat per day to maintain your current weight. Your recommended calorie needs are based on your age, sex, weight, height and daily activity level. A calorie calculator is easy to use and is available online at Health.gov.

One thing that is important to maintaining your nutrition goals is knowing what you're putting in your body.

"A lot of the fast foods that are common and cheap that we eat are made up of all kinds of things we don't know about," Fikry says. "The best thing you can do for yourself is know what is in the foods you are putting in your body."

The best way to know what you are eating is to cook your food yourself, says Tippet.

"When you can, you should be cooking everything you eat so you know what is in it, you can educate yourself on proper nutrition and you can switch it up," she says. "It is about making nutrition a priority."

GET THAT H2O

If you are having trouble losing weight, it may not necessarily be a problem with your food; it could be you are dehydrated.

"Our bodies are almost 70% water and most people are not drinking nearly enough throughout the day," Fikry says. "Being dehydrated can make your body think it's hungry which will make you snack. You also have no energy if you are dehydrated so you most likely won't do any physical activity."

The average person should be consuming between 12-16 cups of water, nearly a gallon per day.

"Get yourself a gallon of water, mark it off and have it by your desk," Dunley says. "That way you can at least know how much you're drinking."

"People underestimate weight loss and water," Tippet added. "You don't drink water the whole time you're sleeping obviously so you wake up dehydrated and a lot of people don't replenish until lunchtime. So then you just went half a day without any water and then you drink two, three regular water bottles. It's not enough in the day and just by drinking a good amount of water, close to a gallon a day, your body will lose a significant amount of weight just by being hydrated."

FAD DIETS JUST EAT YOUR MONEY

We are bombarded with television commercials, Facebook posts and unsolicited advice from our "fit friends" every January on diet plans that will "help

you take the weight off and keep it off." Over the last several years we have heard about diets like keto, the South Beach diet and Adkins that all say reducing or removing certain foods — whether it is carbohydrates, processed flour or sugars — from your diet can help you drop the pounds fast.

"For weight loss purposes, there's no enemy," Windle says. "Carbs are not your enemy. Fats are not your enemy. Sugars are not your enemy. You just have to have everything under control."

Our experts also say pre-packaged food programs like Jenny Craig, Nutrisystem and Weight Watchers aren't any better.

"Diet plans like those want you to buy their products and you do have to become dependent on them for success," Fikry says. "I would say save your money and spend it more on educating yourself on ways you can eat healthy that are sustainable. Nutrition doesn't have to be so complicated, just keep it really simple — whole foods, cook meals yourself when you can and keep hydrated."

Fikry does say that some pre-packaged meal plans can be helpful if you are using them as a way to learn proper portion control.

"If you can learn the portions you're getting from these pre-made meals and then apply that and roll it out into your own life by yourself, then maybe it could be a good stepping stone. But for most people, it doesn't work that way. They just become dependent on it and as soon as they stop buying their food and go back to eating normally, they put the weight right back on."

The problem with packed food programs, says Rochette, is people's eating habits are not "one size fits all."

"Everybody is a different size," he says. "Someone who's 6 feet can eat their maintenance around 2,300-2,600 calories. That's going to be different from someone who's 5 foot 2 inches, 120 pounds. So they obviously shouldn't be eating the same meal and most of those programs won't take that into account." ▼

Rock Hard Fitness is located in Orlando and specializes in weight training, athletic performance training, weight loss, integrated movement, stability, stretching and corrective exercise for all ages and fitness levels. You can find more information at RockHardFitnessOrlando.com or call 407-802-4631.

Hell's Bells Performance Training is a CrossFit, personal training and Olympic Weightlifting (USAW) facility located in St. Petersburg. You can find more information at HellsBelssCrossFit.com or call 727-275-0139.

St. Petersburg Nutrition offers expert, one-on-one coaching needed to make realistic and sustainable lifestyle changes to help you meet your weight loss, health and wellness goals. You can find more information at StPetersburgNutrition.com or call 727-344-9933.

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