If you're like most Americans, health goals like getting more exercise and eating healthier top your list each year. But very few of us actually are able to stick to the resolutions we make for ourselves. That’s because after a holiday season of indulging in all our desires and promising ourselves that we’ll make it all up in the New Year, we tend to set unrealistic goals. Gym memberships skyrocket as people make resolutions to work out five days a week and lose weight. This New Year’s Day, don’t make the usual resolutions – I will never drink again, I will not so much as look at a piece of pie ever again, etc. Instead, focus on resolutions that you can actually achieve.

**Tips for Setting Resolutions You Won’t Abandon**

*Determine your goal.* Grab a piece of paper and write down your goal. Instead of writing something vague like, “I’ll eat healthier this year” or “I’ll be more active,” try setting a specific goal like “I will not eat fast food more than once per week” or “I will go for a walk for 30 minutes, 4 days per week.” After you write your goal down, ask yourself these questions: is it specific, able to be measured, able to be achieved and realistic? If the answer to these questions is no, perhaps daily or weekly goals would be easier to manage.

*Create a plan.* On the same piece of paper, write down a plan to meet your goal. Look at your plan and ask yourself if it is realistic. Be honest. Is it too hard? Will it take too much time? Is it too boring? Ask yourself what you will stick to and change your plan accordingly.

*Get help.* Most people have trouble reaching their goals without some help—either from friends, family or support groups. Now that you have a goal and a plan laid out, is there someone you can reach out to for...
help and support? What about a spouse, sibling, co-worker or a friend who is also making a resolution to be healthier this year?

**Think small.** Eating healthier and being more active is about the small choices you make. Every time you take the stairs or choose a glass of water over a soft drink, you're taking steps toward your goals. All of those small, daily choices are what determine your success, so what matters is keeping your focus on what you'll do today.

**Don't kick yourself.** Shame and guilt can hold back our best intentions. If you often feel guilty after a setback, imagine what you would say to a friend in the same situation. Most likely, you'd be encouraging and supportive and help come up with some solutions to the problem. Treat yourself with the same love and respect, realizing that, more often than not, failure is a part of success. If you have a setback, just start over. What is most important is that you don’t give up.

Source: Eat Smart, Move More

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**Bone of contention: What exercises increase bone strength?**

Regular load bearing exercise has long been advertised as having a beneficial effect on bone formation. Bone, like muscle, responds and adapts to the loads that are applied to it. When a bone experiences a repeated stress, a signal is sent to the body telling it to lay down more bone. This, in turn, will make the bone stronger and allow it to stand up to the increased demands that are placed on it. The topic of bone strength is especially important for the elderly, who may suffer from osteoporosis and run a greater risk of fracture.

Although it is known that exercise can increase bone mass, bone strength, and the mineral content in bone, there have never been any clear guidelines as to what types of exercise lead to the greatest increases in bone mineral density and strength. Researchers at the Indiana University School of Medicine revealed six factors that are important for developing new bone through exercise:

1. **Rate and frequency of loading** - Bone responds most effectively to exercises that involve rapid loading. Additionally, the frequency of an exercise affects the rate of bone formation.
2. **Intensity of exercise** - Load bearing activities that place greater stress on the skeleton will induce greater bone formation. For example, running will elicit greater bone formation than walking.
3. **Short bouts of exercise are better than prolonged workouts** - The majority of new bone formation (95%) is stimulated by the first 40 repetitions of an exercise. Additional repetitions do not significantly increase the amount of bone that is formed.
4. **Rest between training sessions** - Bone takes about 6 to 8 hours to recover its bone making ability. If a second training session starts before this time ends, new bone formation will be compromised slightly.
5. **Frequency of training** - It is much better to add workouts to your training schedule rather than to extend existing workouts, as long as there is enough rest between sessions.
6. **Start early** - Although new bone formation can occur at any time in life, the greatest gains are attained in the pre-adolescent and adolescent years.

**Bottom line:** Increasing bone strength involves many short, intense bouts of exercise, which are more effective at increasing bone mass than are a few long, low intensity activities. The above guidelines may not be the most effective at developing muscular fitness, but following them will improve bone strength and, it is hoped, reduce the risk of fracture and osteoporosis.

Don't wait for a cold, snowy or rainy day to break out the games. Anytime is a good time to connect with your family over a friendly board or card game. Try getting into the habit by designating one night a week as family game night. Consider inviting grandparents or other significant seniors to join you. They grew up before television and computers dominated so much of our lives and can probably teach us a thing or two about playing games. Seniors can also be very patient, making them great partner players for those too young to play by themselves.

Game night can provide an opportunity for quality time with family and friends. It might be one of those rare times during the week when families sit face to face, while interacting, talking and listening to each other. This non-threatening interaction may lead to discussions about important issues that families need to talk about.

**Games help teach important skills:** Most board and card games teach and reinforce important skills such as following directions, cooperation, taking turns, teamwork and how to be a good sport whether you win or lose. These important social skills are not spelled out in the game directions but will need to be modeled and taught by adults or older children. Seize the teachable moment for these lessons and don't expect perfection, especially from younger children. All of these skills are learned over time as children develop cognitively and emotionally. Many games can be modified to make it easier for younger players to learn, or the games may be played with combined teams of older and younger players.

Over time, you will notice players able to concentrate longer and develop an increased attention span, both of which help children do better at school, and adults do better at work.

**Try classic and modern games:** Many classic as well as modern games encourage problem solving and strategizing, both of which are higher level thinking skills that can be exercised in a game situation and then used in real life situations.

Opportunities for learning to be honest abound when playing games. Not cheating when it looks like you might lose, as well as making choices and accepting the consequences of those choices come into play as the player moves a game piece or picks another card. Even responsibility and organization skills can be taught by including all players in the chore of cleaning up and putting all the pieces away so that you can play again another day.

Preschool board games often have simple objectives like learning to recognize colors, numbers, shapes and letters by using visual discrimination skills to match or find pictures and symbols. Many of these games also help youngsters learn to count and develop eye-hand coordination and fine motor control as they manipulate the game pieces.

**Games are educational:** Games for school age children often reinforce the basic skills learned earlier while emphasizing very specific skills like reading, spelling, vocabulary building, memorizing and math. Some games even teach facts about science, social studies, literature, history and money management. Games keep this learning fun by asking players to read questions out loud, keep score or make change with pretend money.

Continued on page 4
Examples of educational skills taught by specific games include:

- **Yahtzee**: Math
- **Scrabble**: Vocabulary, math and spelling
- **Sorry**: Counting, colors and strategy
- **Clue**: Memory, deductive reasoning, county and record keeping
- **Chutes & Ladders**: Counting and consequences
- **Monopoly**: Problem solving, strategy and money skills
- **Jenga**: Eye-hand coordination, observation and concentration
- **Gold Fish**: Number recognition and matching
- **Payday**: Math and money management

A good reference book to have on hand is Hoyle's Rules of Games. In addition to helping you discover how to play a variety of games it also helps solve arguments about game rules.

**Games are fun for all:** Don't fool yourself into thinking games are great learning tools just for children. They can benefit us all, young and old alike, by keeping our fingers nimble, our connections with others strong, our laughter loud and our minds sharp. And games are fun. In the words of Charles Schultz, creator of the Peanuts comic strip, "Try not to have a good time … this is supposed to be educational."

Source: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Family and Consumer Sciences, Arapahoe County

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**Keeping your Aging Brain Sharp**

The Alliance for Aging Research recommends these 10 steps for improving your brain health.

- **Eat a Brain-Healthy Diet.** A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids (commonly found in fish), protein, antioxidants, fruits and vegetables and vitamin B; low in trans fats; and with an appropriate level of carbohydrates will help keep your brain healthy.
- **Stay Mentally Active.** Activities such as learning a new skill or language, working on crossword puzzles, taking classes, and learning how to dance can help challenge and maintain your mental functioning.
- **Exercise Regularly.** Exercising often can increase circulation, improve coordination, and help prevent conditions that increase the risk of dementia such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.
- **Stay Social.** Spending time with friends, volunteering, and traveling can keep your mind active and healthy.
- **Get Plenty of Sleep.** Not getting enough sleep can have a negative impact on brain health.
- **Manage Stress.** Participating in yoga, spending time with friends, or doing other stress-relieving activities can help preserve your ability to remember and learn.
- **Prevent Brain Injury.** Wearing protective head gear and seat belts can help you avoid head injury, which has been associated with an increased risk of dementia.
- **Control Other Health Conditions.** Maintaining a healthy weight, exercising, eating a well-balanced and nutritious diet, and controlling stress can help reduce your risk of diseases that affect your brain, including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and hypertension.
- **Avoid Unhealthy Habits.** Smoking, heavy drinking and use of recreational drugs can increase the risk of dementia and cognitive decline.
- **Consider Your Genes.** If your family history puts you at risk for developing dementia, work with your doctor to find ways to maintain your brain health to help avoid or slow the progression of cognitive decline.

Source: The National Institute of Aging
Major Purchases: Big-Ticket Items

- **Develop a short-term savings plan** for items that cost several thousand dollars or less. For example, if you need $900 worth of furniture or $1,400 for a laptop computer, divide the cost by an amount that can be saved each month (such as $100) to calculate the number of months of required savings (such as nine and 14 months, respectively).

- **Use store layaway plans** to set aside merchandise at attractive prices or financing plans that don’t require immediate payment so that you can save before the bill comes due.

- **Earmark a windfall**, such as retroactive pay or an income tax refund, for big ticket items. Regardless of where the money comes from to make a purchase, compare at least three retailers, shop during sales, and consult back issues of *Consumer Reports* for product recommendations.

- **Purchase extended warranties selectively** on big ticket purchases. According to *Consumer Reports* magazine, they can make sense on certain items such as exercise equipment (such as treadmills and elliptical trainers), laptop computers, and plasma televisions. These items have high odds of needing repairs within three years and most standard warranties are for only a year or less. For other items, however, the odds are much lower that you will collect on extended warranties, which are a high profit item for retailers.

- **Avoid rent-to-own stores that charge a weekly fee** to rent items such as appliances, electronic equipment, and furniture. Part of the weekly fee pays for the product, which a customer eventually will own after an agreed upon amount is paid. Many rent-to-own contracts run for 78 weeks. Although the low weekly price may appear reasonable, rent-to-own is very expensive. Consumers actually end up paying two to four times the retail cost of items. For example, a television with a $500 suggested retail price might cost $15.95 a week, or $1,244.10 for 78 weeks, plus sales tax and possible delivery or processing fees. If timely payments are not made, rent-to-own stores charge late fees to pick up items and/or reinstate the contract. A much better option would be to save $16 a week for about seven months to get the money needed to purchase the television outright.

- **Carrying a balance** for a short time on a low-rate credit card would also be less costly than rent-to-own.

Source: National Endowment for Financial Education
What Have You Got to Lose?

*Do you have a few pounds you need to lose, but do you find it’s hard to get started?*

North Carolina Cooperative Extension can help....

**NoonLiting**

*weight control that keeps working*

- Tuesdays at Noon - Powell-Melvin Agricultural Service Center
  350 Smith Circle Drive, Elizabethtown

- Wednesdays at 1:00 PM - Clarkton Public Library
  10413 North College Street, Clarkton

NoonLiting is a 13-week class with lessons promoting weight management and a healthful eating pattern by focusing on recommendations in the area of: U. S. Dietary Guidelines, moderation of quantities eaten, variety of foods eaten, moderation of fat and sugar eaten, establishment of a long-term food pattern and the importance of regular physical activity.

Cost for the program is $25. Participants will set a weight loss goal of at least 6 pounds. Those reaching their goals will divide the money at the end of the program.

Lessons will take approximately 30 minutes to present. If longer programming times are available, additional information or activities may be included, such as a group walk, food tasting, or food preparation.

If you have questions or would like to sign up for either of these programs, call Sandra Kelly or Brenda Gooden at 862-4591.

Individuals with disabilities and/or special needs interested in these meetings should call 862-4591 so proper arrangements can be made.