

STAYING ON TRACK

Over the Christmas break I was visiting with a friend of mine and the subject came up of setting new goals for the coming year. He asked if I was going to set some goals and I told him I intended to set a few “realistic goals.” He replied that he never set goals because after a few weeks the excitement left, he became lax, and then discouragement set in. I remembered reading a short article in the *Walking Magazine*, October 2001, that I shared with him. I would also like to share it with you.

“Starting a walking program is the easy part: Staying with it is, of course, the true test.” And according to new research from the University of Oklahoma, your stick-to-itiveness is most at risk when your life involves a number of changes, such as new working hours or working conditions, a strained friendship, a health problem, or a family issue.

‘During the first six months of a new exercise program, the excitement may be enough to overcome the occurrence of major life events,’ say Roy F. Oman, Ph.D., one of the study’s authors. ‘But later, once the excitement wanes, major life events become more formidable barriers to maintaining an active lifestyle.’

But you can take some preventive measures, Oman insists. Plan around events that might disrupt your walking routine, such as a vacation or a visit from your in-laws. Then, if you do miss a walk, don’t berate yourself. ‘Missing an exercise session—even two or three—results in no meaningful backsliding in terms of physical fitness and health benefits,’ says Oman. ‘The motto is this: Relapse does not mean collapse.’”

I believe this a great message! My job assignments sometimes take me out of town and I have a hard time finding meaningful time to exercise. I try to exercise in my hotel room, but it is far from adequate. However, as the article states, even if I miss my normal workout all is not lost. In other words, stick to your goals and work through difficult times. The end result is worth it.

Submitted by Larry Wickham