

Resolute to Keep Your Resolutions: A Guide to Wellness in 2012 for Moms of Young Kids

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If you are like most people, your resolutions for 2012 may look suspiciously familiar to previous years' resolutions. As we are in February, it's likely that you have either ditched the resolution to be addressed at another time or you are almost there to making your resolution stick. (It usually takes about 6 weeks to make a new behavior a habit or way of life.) If you are faltering, here are some ways to address 2 common areas of resolution:

Food

Whether your motivation to address food in your life is for weight loss or overall health, this is a challenging area for moms of young kids. We are in a stage of intensive physical and emotional care for our kids and sometimes forget to feed ourselves. Sometimes, we literally don't eat when trying to get through a meal making sure our kids are eating relatively healthy food without too much ending up on the floor (or on you!). So we end up eating their scraps or quickly eating whatever we can find. We also sacrifice a lot of personal care and attention and sometimes metaphorically forget to eat. Food can become a way to soothe or treat ourselves.

Quick Tips

1. Breathe! It sounds simple, but I went to my first yoga class in 3 months this week and realized how often I have been taking shallow breaths just to survive. You may have heard the word “mindfulness” a lot lately. A big part of that big word is simply breathing. Adding breath to your life calms, soothes, actually changes brain chemistry and allows you to make life giving, not destructive decisions more often.
2. Avoid categorizing food as “good” or “bad.” Also avoid thinking that you “crave” or “need” a food. Using strong words like these give food a lot of power. Food is fuel for our bodies and it can be prepared to be more or less enjoyable. Looking at food in this objective way can help you make rational decisions that are consistent with your goals. A good way to do this is to take a moment to evaluate each food choice as “helpful” or “not helpful” in achieving your goals.
3. Talk to a trusted partner or friend or journal. Sometimes we eat to sooth inevitable feelings like overwhelmed, sad, and anxious (among others). If you find yourself eating when you are not hungry or eating large amounts of food, expressing your emotions can curb this unhelpful behavior.

Exercise

This is another important part of our lives that is easy to have go by the way side when our children enter the scene. We have to work around their schedules, garner our partners’ support or trade off time away to exercise, and manage constant or occasional single parenthood. The most striking thing to me about parenthood is that the kid(s) never go away! So fitting

in exercise means that you are either include your child in your activity or you have to rely on someone else to care for the kid(s) while you have that precious time away. In which case, do you really want to be at the gym?

Quick tips

1. Prioritize it! Exercise isn't just for burning calories. As humans, we were built to move! In our modern society, the need to move is almost gone, but that doesn't change our biology. Moving releases endorphins in our brain that can't be achieved in any other (legal) way. While you may feel guilty about strapping "Johnny" into the stroller for a walk or run or sticking "Susie" in the gym day care, remember that a happy and healthy mama is best for your child. It's also a great way to set a boundary that each person in the family deserves time and attention. 99.9% of your time, thoughts, attention and love go to your family. You deserve a slice, too! You can solve the logistical problems with this first tip – make activity a priority and you'll find a way to fit it in to your day.

2. Find motivation that matches your schedule and budget. Here are some ideas:
 - -Take your child for a walk or run. One of my kids' favorite activities is to go on an "adventure." We find a flat, wide path for them to walk and they carry bags to collect whatever is interesting to them along the way: rocks, feathers, pinecones, etc. My kids have also logged many miles in the running stroller and have come up with many fun games to play on the ride despite any initial protests they may have had at the strapping in phase.

- Meet friends with kids for a hike. Depending on the age of the kids, you can carry them in a hiking backpack or carrier or let the kids hike, too. Just make sure you and your companions are well-matched in how the kids do the hike. We live in beautiful country; take advantage of it!
- If you have a bike seat, trailer bike or if your child can ride a bike, go for a bike ride.
- Find a gym with childcare. From luxury to economy, the kid(s) will be fine for an hour.
- Meet a friend for a yoga or other exercise class. You may luck out and find one at the gym. Or you can check around the community for drop in childcare.
- What is your creative solution? Share it with a friend. Or better yet, invite her along!

A new year is a psychological and spiritual time of renewal and a great time to set goals. The best goals are specific, measurable and attainable. Evaluating your resolutions is not about "shoulds" and judging yourself.

We are all human, so along the path of those 6 weeks to a life change, expect to trip and fall. When this happens, do for yourself what you do for your kid(s): get back up and try again!