

Healthy LIVING

Make The Best of A Day

By Dr. Sandy Sachs

Many of us go through life with guiding principles. Call them affirmations, mantras, proverbs, adages or words to live by. A couple of mine include, "I'd rather be nice than right", "Better to focus on what you can do, rather than what you can't do", and "A job done well is a job well done".

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to listen and hear one of my patient's favorite adages. It wasn't hard to guess what guides him because for the past few visits he had walked into my office eating an apple. Yep, you guessed it, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." Some might find this ironic, since he was in a doctor's office but the irony is lost since we encourage healthy people to come into our office.

Recently, I have thought more about "the apple" adage as it relates to health. Most of us recognize that eating an apple is good for us. In



fact, there is no shortage of great information circulating about foods and activities that promote health. The amount of information can be overwhelming, if not paralyzing and often does not correlate with a healthier society.

In my office, I hear a lot of shoulds. "I should eat better", "I should exercise more", "I should take more time for myself." These shoulds are often code for haven't or won't. This reminds me of another proverb: "Should won't. Want will". We tend not to (won't) do, what we should do. We often will do what we want to do. What I'm getting at is that habit, "putting one foot in front of the other", can often be THE ingredient to achieving long term health.

Are you having trouble maintaining a healthy lifestyle? Start with prioritizing your health. List the top 5 priorities in your life. Is health one of them? If health is not one of them, consider making it a higher priority, otherwise,



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forming a habit can be very difficult. Next, create a plan. Mentally and or physically, walk yourself through the steps necessary to make your health endeavor habitual. If your priority is to eat healthier foods, how will you get the foods on your plate? Where will you shop? When will you shop? Who will prepare the food for you? Step three is habituate. Don't just get healthy food on your plate for one week. Do it regularly. Do it often. Lastly, re-evaluate after a period of time. Is health still a high priority for you? What obstacles got in your way? What new insights did you have? Are there any changes that need to be made to ensure your habit stays?

Looking back at the "apple a day" adage, I am empowered not with the knowledge that apples are healthy. Rather, the simplicity of the "a day" prescription is the more powerful message. Doing something healthy, on a regular basis, perhaps daily, ensures habituation. When we want something, and we create a road map for getting what we want, more often than not, we can get what we want. I hope this provides some "food for thought" ♣

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