

## SIMPLE, DOABLE ROUTINE TWEAKS TO DEVELOP HEALTHY HABITS

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 16 Jan 2024 · C1

Lose weight, learn a new language, spend less, travel more—these are just four of the most popular New Year's resolutions people make. Ironically, they're also among the resolutions that rarely make it past the first few months of the year.



“Change is hard,” says Dr. Jon Edward B. Jurilla, section chief of psychiatry of Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed). “It takes you out of your comfort zone and requires effort to produce the desired results. If you made a resolution, but are accountable to no one but yourself, then there are no apologies or explanations needed when you fail or don't even try.”

How to be more resolute about your resolutions? “Instead of making grand plans, commit to simple and doable tweaks to your routines that can help you develop healthy habits,” he points out.

Unlike ambitious resolutions that can be discouraging to restart when you slack up, resuming these tweaks to your daily routine is easier, and their effects will benefit you for a very long time.

Sleep well. Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep for most of the week. “It's this time when your body and brain rest, recover and repair themselves,” says Dr. Jurilla. “Getting the recommended hours of sleep improves your mood, lessens stress and sharpens your ability to think and concentrate.”

Eat more veggies. Simply eating 4–5 servings of fruits and veggies daily is enough to reap the health benefits of nature's superfoods. It's certainly a delicious way to lose weight, reduce blood pressure, and lower your risk of cancer, heart disease, and stroke.

Get an annual health screening. Certain diseases often go unnoticed because they do not present symptoms. “A yearly checkup, complete with diagnostic exams, can detect disease, hopefully in its early stages, so you can get timely and appropriate treatment. This saves you costly and stressful confinements in the hospital and prolongs your life.”

Exercise your brain. We're all guilty of mindless scrolling on social media, but if you want to stimulate your brain, Dr. Jurilla suggests doing otherwise. “Play word games, solve a puzzle, compute without using a calculator, read a book, or recite a poem from memory.”

Practice mindfulness.

“Mindfulness spares you from thoughts that only lead to anger, anxiety and depression. Pay open, active attention to the present, and see your thoughts and feelings objectively, without judgment. It makes you less obsessive over things beyond your control.”

Chill. For some, relaxing is a tall order, especially at a time when there's work to finish, bills to pay and people to look after. “But it gives you the energy and the mindset to deal with life's stresses,” says Dr. Jurilla. “When you are rested and recharged, you are healthier. Your breathing and heart rate slow, your blood pressure normalizes, and you are less of a candidate for heart attack and stroke.”

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