

A pair of black and yellow running shoes with mesh detailing and yellow laces. In the foreground, there are two water bottles: a large blue one and a smaller yellow one. The items are on a light-colored wooden surface. A black rectangular box with white and blue text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Healthy New Year

Tips For Your
Resolution To Get Fit

Get Fit

Creating a health-inspired resolution for the New Year is a great way to start on a positive note. A reasonable place to start is by promising yourself to get fit this year.

Maybe you overindulged during the holiday season or have been meaning to get in shape for some time. Either way, the New Year is a great time to improve your health-related decision-making. Join millions of Americans this year and create a resolution that will benefit your health and put you on the path to sustainable well-being.

CONSULT WITH A DOCTOR

This may seem a little counter intuitive. After all, you're planning to begin an exercise and diet program so you can avoid trips to the doctor. This is a crucial step, however, as certain conditions can be aggravated by strenuous activity such as exercise.

Before you begin a new exercise or diet program, The Mayo Clinic recommends consulting with your doctor to check for signs of heart disease, diabetes or even arthritis. People with these conditions may need to follow a special exercise program.

JOIN A GYM

The beginning of the year is a good time to begin a new gym membership. Check with local gyms to find the best

value for the membership that fits your needs. Most gyms offer reduced fees if you purchase annually rather than monthly.

Putting up a good chunk of change at once could be a good way to ensure that you will stay with your new gym commitment as the weather warms.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF GETTING FIT

Getting fit will benefit you physically and mentally. Once you get in a solid rhythm in your new, active lifestyle, you will notice a higher level of endurance, which makes exercise easier to complete.

You also will notice higher self-esteem. Regular physical activity has been proven to improve your confidence, especially when it is associated with more energy and accelerated weight loss.

Exercise will increase the number of calories you are able to burn and will raise your resting metabolism. That means you're even burning calories while you rest. There also are great improvements going on inside your body. Although you may not be able to physically see the changes, regular exercise is reducing your blood pressure and risk of heart disease.



Reconnect With Family

Many families fall victim to life's busy requirements. Some use an eventful lifestyle as an excuse for not being seriously active in their family's lives. This year, make a resolution to make your family stronger by reconnecting.

Having tension within your family can lead to disorders such as anxiety or depression. It is important to stay close with your family members even if the situation causes discomfort.

SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

The National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that 43.8 million adults in America will suffer from some form of mental illness each year. Here are some warning signs the organization reports could be connected to mental health issues:

- Suddenly becoming high risk and making out-of-control decisions;
- Significant changes in weight (large gains or losses);
- Excessive use of drugs or alcohol; and
- Sad or unmotivated feelings that last longer than two weeks.

If you notice any of these warning signs, contact your doctor and discuss your feelings and concerns about mental health.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Having a strong family bond will lower your risk of mental illnesses. A robust relationship gives you a sense of belonging and purpose and will even boost your confidence and lower stress.

It may seem like a challenge



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to reconnect with family members with whom you have lost touch. Be it due to disagreements, long distances or even just disconnecting due to a busy schedule, rebuilding your

relationship will give you a sense of contentment and happiness. Strong family bonds can even cause an improvement in blood pressure and increase life expectancy.

REBUILDING THE BOND

To rebuild a relationship with a family member, it is crucial that both parties are on board with reconnecting. If the feeling and effort is

mutual, participating in short, direct conversations can be a great start. Once you regain familiarity and trust, longer conversations will soon follow.



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Forget Fast Food

You have surely heard the negative effects that fast food can have on your overall health. Sometimes, you may ignore these in exchange for convenience. Learn proper planning during the downtime you have available throughout the week to help you get back on a healthy diet.

After ditching fast food, you will quickly notice significant changes in how you feel overall. It tends to be highly processed and contain high levels of carbohydrates, unhealthy fats and salt.

High numbers of calories also come with the fast-food territory. These calorie levels are often met with little or no nutritional value for your body.

PLAN AHEAD A WEEK'S MEALS

A busy workweek can throw you off when it comes to eating healthier. Take

advantage of your weekend by picking a few hours to create healthy, low-fat meals that can be easily prepared.

A slow cooker can be your best friend when it comes to completing this task. You also can prepare a dish that will hold up well in the freezer and portion it out for meals throughout the week.

HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES TO CURB HUNGER

Another healthy eating tip is to always have pre-cut vegetables and

fruit at the ready. When the urge for a quick snack arises, having these options already prepared will reduce the likeliness of going to a drive-through for a quick fix.

In addition to fruits and vegetables, invest in healthy nuts, such as almonds. Almonds are packed with healthy unsaturated fats that will leave you feeling fuller longer, while promoting cardiovascular health.

Another easy snack to have around is easy-open cans or pouches of tuna. A can of tuna's shelf life is about three

years and is packed with omega-3 fats that can reduce cholesterol.

WHY AVOID FAST FOOD?

The American Diabetes Association reports that an average fast-food meal contains more than 1,000 calories and may increase your blood sugar above your target range.

In addition to increasing your chances for diabetes, fast food contains high levels of sodium that will heighten your risk factor for blood pressure issues.

Quit Smoking

Each year more than 160 million Americans make New Year's resolutions. The American Lung Association reports that quitting smoking is the most common resolution.

And according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 50 million more former smokers than current smokers. Those successful quitters have utilized high levels of determination and developed a quit plan to kick the habit. Engage in some of these helpful tips to be smoke-free for the New Year.

EFFECTIVE QUIT PLAN

Many smokers who decide to use the cold turkey method — giving up cigarettes all at once — often fail. Quitting cold turkey will cause nicotine withdrawal symptoms that may include insomnia, irritability, poor concentration and headaches.

If you think these withdrawals are too much for you, there are still effective ways to go about quitting. According to the CDC, a quit plan should include:

- **Picking a quit date.** Plan to cut down on your level of nicotine so you can meet your goal.

- **A support group.** Telling family and friends about your decision will give them reason to help keep you motivated.

- **A list of reasons.** Make a physical list of the reasons you want to quit smoking. Put this list in places where you tend to smoke more.

FREE RESOURCES

A support system is crucial

in a fight against nicotine withdrawal. The CDC has listed a few helpful resources to use when you're up against a craving. 1-800-QUIT-NOW is a great service to offer coaching, assist in a quit plan and provide you educational materials. Smokefree TXT is a text message service that will give you advice and motivation. Get in the habit of sending this ser-

vice a text when you feel a craving come on.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

There are many different medications available to assist in quitting smoking. The downside to some over-the-counter medicines is that you will still rely on nicotine. Products such as patches or gums will release levels of nicotine in your bloodstream to relieve the

craving without the dangerous chemicals that come from burning cigarettes.

Consult with your doctor to determine which product will work best for you. There are other prescription medications available that you can choose. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of each before you begin your journey to become smoke-free.



A Vacation from Stress

Stress is sometimes unavoidable. Among deadlines, financial issues and family responsibilities, it might feel like you can't get caught up emotionally. There are several crucial reasons to learn to cut the stress out this New Year.

Low levels of stress can be good for you, even causing hormones to overload your body that will increase your heart rate and give an energy boost. When stress begins interfering with your ability to lead a normal life, it becomes dangerous. This January, plan a vacation to reset your stress levels.

DON'T STRESS ABOUT PLANNING

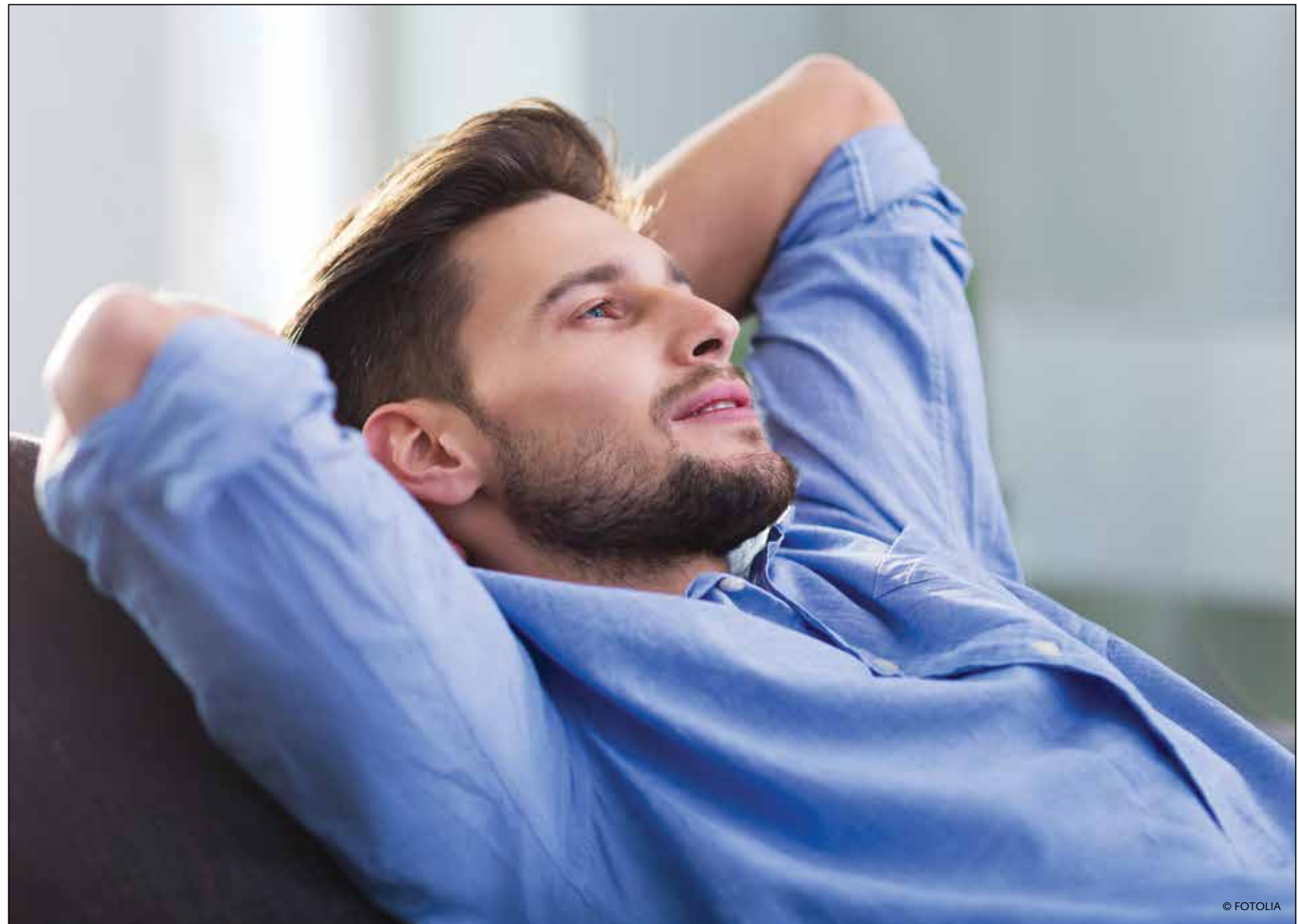
The whole point of taking a stress-free vacation is to avoid the pressures of your everyday life. Planning a vacation can get stressful if you're attempting to do it alone. Instead, enlist the help of your local travel agency.

Professional agents can take control by booking hotel rooms and flight tickets, and can even provide an itinerary of attractions at your destination.

CHOOSING A DESTINATION

When planning your vacation spot, decide on your getaway goals. For instance, if long lines or big crowds aren't your idea of relaxing, you may benefit from booking a trip to a less popular vacation destination. America is full of beautiful places that aren't considered tourist hotspots.

The time of year can also play a major role in how busy a destination will be. Do some



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research to find out when your dream destination is busiest. Planning around their slow times may save you money and will cut down on the crowds.

SECURE YOUR HOME

Leaving your home for a long period of time can be stressful. The last thing you want to do on your vacation is worry about your house being

taken care of. Find a reliable house sitter to check in on your home or even stay while you are gone.

In addition to a house sitter, it is a good idea to talk to a

home security agency. They can send alerts to your smartphone or even let you tune in to your security cameras. This peace of mind will add to your stress-free state of mind.

Sign Up to Volunteer

Volunteering for a cause that is important to you will give you a sense of purpose. Start your New Year off with a promise to put others before you and notice great benefits to your overall health.

Committing to volunteering is a worthy responsibility with a great payoff. By solving problems and improving lives, you can expect to feel a large sense of pride and accomplishment. Sharing your time to help a cause that you feel strongly about can help you transform your own life.

HOW TO CHOOSE AN ACTIVITY

When choosing an organization to support, be sure you can fully commit. Volunteering means you won't be financially compensated for your efforts. Instead, you'll receive a greater feeling of self-worth, an opportunity to expand your social presence and a way to give back to your community.

Do research on causes that are important to you to find the right group to join. Once you have decided on a cause that can benefit from your assistance, head to your local volunteer center to see how you can offer your services.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

The AARP reports that many mental and physical benefits are gained by Americans aged over 65 who volunteer. Some of these benefits include:

- **A lower risk of depres-**



sion. Increased social interaction builds a solid system of commitment and interest. These two traits have been shown to decrease depression.

- **Keeps you active.** Staying active as you age is a great way to increase brain func-

tion.

- **Reduces stress.** – Helping others gives you a sense of calm and meaning.

- **Longer lifespan.** Studies show that volunteers over 65 have less than half the risk of death compared to non-volunteers.

TAX BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

If you're on a fixed budget, feel comforted that your philanthropic efforts will help you out when it comes time to pay taxes. While you cannot deduct the cost out of your time, you may still be able to

claim out-of-pocket expenses. This includes vehicle mileage and supplies. Keep receipts handy when you visit your tax office this year. Work with your local tax preparer to make sure you are keeping the correct information for a deduction come tax time.

Achieve Your Resolution

New Year's resolutions are easy to make but can be challenging to achieve. The trick is to not make a resolution that is overly challenging but one that is within your grasp.

Resolutions can range from behavior changes to new goals depending on your lifestyle and goals. Perhaps you want to spend this New Year becoming healthy or you have made a goal to reach the next level in your career. Either way, there are tips you can use to be certain that your goal is achieved.

PLAN YOUR RESOLUTION

A resolution should not be made in the spur of the moment as the holiday approaches. Take a few months leading up to the New Year to create a resolution and a plan how you will achieve it.

While you should sprinkle in different goals for yourself throughout the year, only choose one resolution each year. This should be your main focus. Be sure to choose one that is extremely important to you and one you can put the majority of your efforts into achieving.



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MOVING FORWARD

Define sub-goals that will eventually guide you in completing your main resolution. These sub-goals should be limited by certain dates throughout the year.

Set small rewards for yourself as these sub-goals are

achieved. These will be used to regain motivation and also show that progress is being made.

Keep a journal for different milestones you achieve during your journey. These notes also can be used as helpful reminders if you feel that you are slip-

ping away from your goal.

DON'T GET DISCOURAGED

It's important to remember that you are human. You will likely stray from your New Year's resolution from time to time. The important thing to remember is that any setback

is not permanent and is no reason to give up.

Find family members or friends who also are committing to a resolution and use each other as a support system. Kind words can be great motivation to stay on the right path.