

# Six Simple Rules to LIVE BY

*Local author tells us to slow down  
and make some changes*



Demarest resident David J. Singer is the author of *Six Simple Rules for a Better Life*.

**ONCE AGAIN I'VE FALLEN DOWN ON MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS. WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?**

The secret to making real, lasting change is to slow down. We live in a world filled with offers for immediate change. Those quick fixes, when they do work, rarely last, which is why the same goals – getting fit, losing weight, quitting smoking – show up year after year. It takes 21 days to form a new habit, as long as that habit is small enough.

To accomplish big goals, we have to break them down into small pieces and then focus on one new habit at a time. This slow and steady approach is extremely effective and adds up to the positive changes we all want.

**HOW CAN I INSTALL HEALTHY EATING HABITS IN MY KIDS? THEY LOVE FAST FOOD AND OTHER "JUNK" FOOD.**

As with almost any change, improving eating habits doesn't happen overnight. Break the "healthy eating" goal into smaller goals to adopt one at a time. For example, over the next 21 days, convert the breakfast cereals your kids eat to ones made from whole grains. Then, over another 21-day period, help your kids get into the habit of eating some fresh fruit every day. It's amazing how the changes can add up: One change each 21 days adds up to 52 new eating habits three years from now.

**I KEEP A RUNNING LIST OF GOALS I WANT TO ACCOMPLISH. HOW CAN I FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE LIST RATHER THAN FRUSTRATED BY EVERYTHING I HAVEN'T DONE YET?**

Looking forward to more accomplishments is a great motivator, and a list of goals is great raw material for our progress. But it's important that

we don't end up seeing the list of goals as a list of shortcomings. Even someone who would not be officially labeled as a perfectionist likely suffers to some extent from the perfectionist mentality, frustrated by all that they haven't accomplished – and that's a negative, unhappy place to be. It's important to make a second list – a list of achievements – and to stop and celebrate our progress every day, looking back at all that we've accomplished. We deserve it.



**I'VE JOINED AND QUIT GYMS SEVEN TIMES OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS. LOTS OF MY FRIENDS HAVE THE SAME PROBLEM. ARE WE JUST NOT CUT OUT TO BE EXERCISERS?**

Whether you join a gym or choose some other way to exercise (taking walks, for example), doing some exercise is far better than doing none. Instead of setting a goal that's too big and then becoming frustrated (and canceling your gym membership) when you fail to achieve it, choose a goal that's small enough to adopt as a habit. If you find that you're having trouble sticking with it, reset your goal to an even smaller one until you get to a point where you can stick with it. Then slowly build from there.

**IS POSITIVE THINKING THE MOST IMPORTANT HABIT FOR HAPPINESS?**

It's important to learn that all our thinking – positive and negative – is directly connected to our emotions. "The power of negative thinking" is not a phrase most of us have heard, but we are all familiar with the results of negative thinking – stewing over minor inconveniences, being snippy with the ones we love and general unhappiness. A critical habit for happiness is learning to recognize when our thoughts are running away from us and then bringing ourselves back into the present moment, reminding ourselves not to sweat the small stuff and to be grateful for what we have. ♦