



SOLUTIONS

Volume 1

2010

2010 New Year. 2010 New YOU.

It's Time To Get Healthy!

How many times have you been asked what goals you set for yourself in 2010? I've been asked a few, and I always feel bad that I don't have a list I can whip out. However, I learned a long time ago that lists of goals don't work for me. In fact, they tend to overwhelm me. So, while I usually have a few vague, "I'd like to get this done at some point, maybe," goals, I leave the super-specific lists to others. I'd like to talk to you today about a goal that I think is vague enough not to be overwhelming, yet specific enough to get you headed in a new direction. This year, I want to encourage you to take a look at your healthiness level. Particularly, I want you to focus on three different areas:

Physical Health: You know it; I know it. The way you care for your physical body indicates how much you care about yourself in general. If you have some work to do in this area, I want you to approach it differently this year. Instead of "I will go to the gym five times per week, and I will not let sugar or carbs touch my lips," I want you to begin to speak to yourself positively. Choose a supportive mantra: "I am going to make healthy food choices this meal," "I am becoming healthier with each sit up," or "I have control over my eating." The trick is to stay focused in the moment, and not get overwhelmed with everything you think you need to do.

Spiritual Health: Numerous studies have shown that a belief in a higher power is important for healthiness. Those who choose to "go it alone" do not do as well as those who nurture their spiritual side. I ask all my new clients if they are experiencing any religious or spiritual difficulties. I am amazed by the number of people who do not have a spiritual practice, yet are not okay with that. Now, I'm not telling you to go to church. I'm also not telling you to pray, or anything else you associate with religion. I am telling you to take inventory, decide how you could connect with your spiritual self and your higher power and start doing it. If you had a bad experience as a child, or even as an adult, don't throw the baby out with the bath water – get into research mode and try again. You will begin to find inner peace, which is a core component to healthiness.

Mental Health: The time has come to get healthy mentally. Here is my definition of a mentally healthy person: "being" the way you know you need to be no matter what is going on around you. To me, it's all about refusing to spend your life reacting. Many people don't know who they are, so they just spend all their time "trying on" the feelings of everyone else. Next time someone comes at you angrily, try refusing to match that emotion by becoming angry back. Instead, choose not to allow their anger to infect you. Becoming appropriate and consistent in your actions and reactions is the mark of a healthy person. Remember, people can only affect you if you allow them to.

Now, how do you get healthy? There are lots of ways:

- Go to counseling if you think that would be useful to you. Many people are surprised at the healing properties of talking about concerns with a neutral party who is trained to see things you might not be picking up on.
- Read a book. Just head over to your favorite bookstore and browse the "self help section." Try to avoid the "whiny" books about WHY you are the way you are, and grab onto a book about moving in the right direction.
- Find a mentor. This is my favorite method of becoming healthier. I have a few people in my life that I trust enough to hold me accountable. They are people who I believe are choosing to live a healthy life. We discuss how they learned this, what has been useful to them that I might also do, and what they see in me that I need to take a look at.

So, there it is. Your goal and mine for 2010 – we are going to continue to work on getting healthy.

For caring and confidential help for personal and family problems, call Solutions EAP.

Getting a Handle on Holiday Debt

Now that the joys of the holiday season have come to an end, are you overwhelmed by the gift that Santa has left you? It's in the mailbox — your credit card bill! According to the American Consumer Credit Council, the average American spends \$935.00 each year on Christmas. Credit card debt can be a slippery slope into financial disaster, with the average American carrying \$8000 in credit card debt. Even though the 2010 holiday season is many months away, now is the time to work on cleaning up any debt problems you've accumulated during the recent holiday, and put a plan in place to avoid a repeat.



First things first: Commit to no more credit card spending unless it is an emergency. Second, start paying for things with cash and save all loose change. It may not sound like much but you will be surprised at how fast it adds up. An extra \$10-\$20 a month can make a big difference when it is put toward credit card debt. If you carry balances on multiple credit cards, put the majority of what you can pay each month toward the card with the highest interest rate first until it is paid off (versus making even payments on all the cards).

Here are some small ways to cut back, giving you more to put toward paying down debt:

- bring lunch to work vs. fast food
- buy generic brands at the grocery store
- go an extra week between haircuts
- designate tax return to pay off debt

Now, it's time to plan for this year's holiday season. Do you really know how much you spent on Christmas recently? Pull out receipts and credit card statements. Consider what you spent not only on gifts, but decorations, Christmas cards/postage, extra items at the grocery store, and travel expenses. Get an accurate sense of how much money you really need and where you need to cut back this year. Armed with this information, you can then set up a Christmas club account or start making purchases monthly to help it fit your budget. Although Christmas comes only once a year, the financial stress can have a carry-over effect all year long. Planning ahead is a gift you can give yourself.

Ready to Ride

Make sure your child safety seat is properly installed. Research shows that child safety seats reduce the risk of fatal injury for infants by 71% and by 54% for toddlers involved in motor vehicle crashes. Unfortunately, nine out of ten seats are installed incorrectly or need repair. FREE child safety seat inspections sites for Southwest Louisiana are listed below:



PLACE	LOCATION(s)	TIME	CONTACT
La. State Police	805 Main St. (Near Chennault)	Monday 8 a.m.—11 a.m.	Stephen Lafargue 491-2511
Lake Charles City Police	830 Enterprise Blvd. (close to Broad St.)	BY APPOINTMENT ONLY Appointment times may vary	Beth Stevens 491-1456
Office of Public Health	707 A East Prien Lake Road (next to Health Unit)	BY APPOINTMENT ONLY Appointments made M-F, 8am – 4pm	Alisa Stevens 475-3219
Lake Charles Fire Dept.	4200 Kirkman St (Near Moss Regional)	BY APPOINTMENT ONLY Appointments made Mon - Sun, 7am – 7pm	Ashley Miano 491-1360
Safety Council	1201 Ryan St (Corner of Ryan and Clarence)	BY APPOINTMENT ONLY Appointments made Mon - Thur, 8am-4pm; Fri 8am - 11:30am	Joni Fontenot 436-3354
Beauregard Memorial Hospital	600 South Pine St. Derrider	Wednesday by appointment & 1st Sunday of the month	Joan Baker 337-462-7281

Price of inspection: FREE. Price of your child's safety: PRICELESS. Don't leave home without it.