

Start small by doing what's good for you

Dr. Jeannie Aschkenasy
clinical psychologist

We know we should eat healthy, but many of us don't. We know exercise benefits us in countless ways, but many of us don't make the time. Smoking cigarettes, getting too little sleep, and drinking too much alcohol are three additional areas where we can make a difference in our health – but many of us don't do what we know is good for us.

According to the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC), as of 2012, approximately 133 million Americans, nearly 1 in 2 adults – live with at least one chronic health condition, defined by the CDC as a “non-communicable illness that is prolonged in duration, does not resolve spontaneously and is rarely cured completely.”

These chronic conditions include arthritis, cancer, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, eye disease, heart disease, hemophilia, high blood pressure, mental illness, mental disability, obesity, physical disabilities, among others.

According to the CDC about one quarter of

people living with a chronic condition experience significant limitations in activities of daily living (ADLs).

It is likely that even if you do not have a chronic condition yourself, you know someone or are related to someone who does.

Individuals with diabetes learn to count carbs, check blood sugars, and take prescribed insulin, but often don't comply.

People with hemophilia learn to prophylactically treat with factor but often don't comply.

Outpatient physical therapy patients are given home programs to work on, both during and after therapy, but often they don't comply.

Obese individuals know the importance of adopting healthy eating habits, but often they do not eat healthy.

Those with heart disease know the importance of good nutrition and exercise, but often don't comply.

Most of us know we should follow-up with a doctor, dentist, get a colonoscopy, etc., however we do not.

Why is it so difficult to do the things that we know are good for us? That is a very difficult question to answer.

There are many reasons, fears, and excuses – some more valid than others. The important thing to remember, always, is that you are NOT the chronic condition. Rather, you are an individual WITH a chronic condition.

Maybe you were recently diagnosed with a chronic condition, maybe you have had the condition for many years.

Change is hard, even when it is in our best interest. Take one behavior and endeavor to change it.

Start small. Start now. Seek additional support. One day at a time. After all, it is a New Year.



About Dr. Jeannie

Jeannie Aschkenasy, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist, with more than 25 years of experience in private practice and at Rush University Medical Center working with children, adolescents, adults and families.

Dr. Jeannie Aschkenasy may be reached at:
180 N. Michigan Ave. #2201,
Chicago, IL 60601
phone: 312-726-4464
docjeanniea@gmail.com