

Getting Off And On The Self Help Merry-Go-Round Can Lead To Harm

BY VAL FARMER
www.valfarmer.com

What are you going to do about that unwanted behavior - the particular vice or problem you are trying to overcome? Is it excessive weight, overspending, smoking, excessive and uncontrolled drinking, or an issue with anger management?

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Why try again when repeated attempts at self-help fail? It seems like we are not designed to accept defeat easily. It is a testimony to the resiliency of the human spirit that we attempt again and again.

Yet getting on and off the self-help merry-go-round leads to harm, endangerment, discouragement and a host of emotionally distressing symptoms. These include such things as obsessive preoccupation with the problem, increased stress, anxiety, irritation, depression, loss of concentration, fatigue, guilt, self-hatred, impaired social relationships and damaged physical health.

Hope and false hope. What is the difference between hope and false hope, confidence and overconfidence, realistic goals and wishful thinking, eventual success or failure?

Setting a self-improvement goal is not the problem. Goals direct our attention and energy. They motivate us. They call on our past repertoire of skills and knowledge in dealing with similar problems. Goals are important for setting a standard for judging satisfaction or dissatisfaction about our progress. They are markers for personal rewards and building blocks for self-confidence.

Why self-help fails. Some of the reasons so many people fail at self-help changes centers around setting unrealistic goals, underestimating the difficulty and complexity of the change, how long it will take and how much effort will be required. When it comes to change, the best is an enemy of the good. Goals need to be modest and achievable.

Unrealistic goals can be beyond any combi-



Val
FARMER

nation of effort or ability to conquer them. The initial effort leads to early success followed by resistance to change - such as the body's natural defense against weight loss resulting in a plateau effect - then lack of change and finally abandoning attempts to change. It is how people interpret failure that leads to their determination to try again. They convince themselves that with a few

small adjustments success is within their grasp.

Unfortunately people tend to blame themselves for the failure. The problem wasn't with their effort. It is tempting to blame lack of effort because, by definition, effort is correctable and that gives hope.

More than likely, the problem is with their incomplete analysis of the problem and persisting in wrong strategy. Their well-learned strategies for attacking the problem are inadequate and inappropriate. By denial, avoiding facts, wishful thinking and an unwillingness to focus on the process of the change and learning from mistakes, further attempts at change result in another repeated and discouraging failure. These repeated attempts take a psychological toll in terms of emotional distress.

What constitutes a good self-help strategy? Change is hard. Change takes time. People shouldn't try to change too many things at once. We have a limited amount of energy for self-regulation. Goals and effort take memory, thoughts and energy.

The long term goal should be specific and attainable. It then needs to be broken down into short term goals with ways to monitor progress and reward success.

People in the process of change need regular

feedback. They need to monitor ways the environment hindered or helped toward the change. This helps them develop better strategies for dealing with the change and taking corrective action that is required to accomplish the goal.

Another key component of success at this point is an honest appraisal of where success and failure came from. This honest willingness to learn to admit and learn from mistakes and to deal with specifics makes for realistic hope. In the lyrics of Kenny Rogers in, The Gambler, "You've to know when to hold them, know when to fold them, know when to walk away and know when to run."

Regular feedback also gives an opportunity for experiencing satisfaction and rewards for goal attainment. Being with others who are working toward the same change gives an opportunity to exchange information and experience social support and encouragement.

Don't give up. We need lofty goals in our life. We need hope to make the effort and persist. Stars are something to reach for, not sticks to beat ourselves up with. What is often missing from the equation is the plan, the method and the stepping stones to get there.

We can play with the hand we are dealt and turn it into a winner. Setbacks are not defeats. Mistakes are to be learned from. The only true failure is the failure to learn from mistakes. Goals can be revised, broken down, and made possible.

Change is hard. Change takes time. Change means we have to get down and dirty and take a hard, honest look at ourselves, not so much in terms of the ultimate goal or our effort, but our pathway we have chosen to the goal.

For more information on goal setting, visit Val Farmer's website at www.valfarmer.com.

Val Farmer is a clinical psychologist specializing in family business consultation and mediation with farm families. He lives in Wildwood, Missouri and can be contacted through his website.

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VISITING HOURS

Prevent Winter Weight Gain

BY ANGIE O'CONNOR

Avera Sacred Heart Wellness Center
Coordinator

Many people tend to gain weight during the winter months. Some people joke that they are eating and sleeping more because they are getting ready to hibernate. But there is not a way to crawl into a warm hiding place and sleep the fat away. Those extra pounds acquired over the winter may stay on year after year, eventually contributing to health problems such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

People gain weight during the winter months for different reasons. If you have a tendency to gain weight during the winter, it's important for you to figure out what factors contribute to this tendency and then plan accordingly. Simple changes in behavior can often have enormous health benefits.

Make a holiday survival plan. Holidays can mean less time to exercise, more treats, and extra alcohol and stress. You couldn't find a better recipe for weight gain.

1) Make a plan for staying active. Try to come up with some creative solutions to factors that have made exercise during the holidays difficult - travel, busyness, lack of childcare, etc. Schedule these new solutions into your calendar the same way you schedule your parties, meetings and family gatherings. If you don't schedule it, you may not get it done.

2) Think of ways to reduce holiday stress. Exercise is the best stress-reducer around and stress reduction is one of the best reasons to stay active - no

matter what the season may be. Make time for exercise and activities that give the holiday meaning and that provide pleasure and opportunities to be with people you enjoy.

3) Eat defensively. Include occasional small portions of holiday treats that you really love, but balance this by eating more prudently at other meals. Avoid munching and drinking just because "it's there." I know that can be difficult, but the average person gains approximately seven pounds during the holiday season. Smaller portions of the "good stuff that's not so good for you" and larger portions of the actual "good stuff."

Make friends with winter. Winter can cause a decline in physical activity, as shorter days and inclement weather like we have been experiencing can limit exercise options. Come up with some creative solutions. Check out fitness centers and community recreation programs. Buy some warmer clothes and learn how to dress for cold weather. There are many things you can do in the winter months that are terrific calorie-burners.

And don't forget that exercise can be an effective treatment for mild to moderate depression. People who experience winter depression can try combining exercise and light therapy by exercising outdoors when time and weather permit.

Have a healthy and safe holidays.

THIS WEEKLY COLUMN IS PRODUCED BY THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE AT AVERA SACRED HEART HOSPITAL TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND PROVIDE USEFUL MEDICAL INFORMATION TO OUR COMMUNITY.

MORE "THANKFUL" LETTERS

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY FIRST GRADE

Maveric: I am thankful for my parents because they love me!
Caleb: I am thankful for hamburger pizza. Yum!
Izabelle: I am thankful for my brothers and sisters and God and Jesus!
Cole: I am thankful for hot chocolate with big white marshmallows and colorful sprinkles on top!
Alivia: I am thankful when I go places with my parents!
Josh: I am thankful for ice skating because it's fun!
Dominic: I am thankful for my grandpa, grandma, cousins, and my whole family!
Lance: I am thankful for Veterans; especially my dad!
Vada: I am thankful for my grandmas Kitty, Mousy!
Drew: I am thankful for what I have.
Alexis: I am thankful for the whole entire world!
Christian: I am thankful for my pets when they lick my face.
Kaden: I am thankful for the snow, so I can jump in it!
Hailee: I am thankful my sister goes to the same dance class as me because I can see her!
Taya: I am thankful for my teacher because she's nice!
Landen: I am thankful for my Papa.
Jayda: I am thankful for Hailee and Vada because they are nice to me.
Cohan: I am thankful for turkey on Thanksgiving because I get to eat turkey.
Gage: I am thankful for chicken because it makes me grow.
Madison: I am thankful for my home because I am safe and protected.
Brady: I am thankful for my pets because they are nice to me!
Tanner: I am thankful for food because it makes you healthy.
Keith: I am thankful for air because I

can breathe.
Mac: I am thankful to be free because I am free to do anything.
Dessa: I am thankful for jerky because it doesn't get stuck in my teeth.
Marilyn: I am thankful for my pets because they are nice.
Hanna: I am thankful for my family because I love them.
Tori: I am thankful for elderly people because I can help them.
Mackenzie: I am thankful for my pets because they are nice to me.
Tailor: I am thankful for people who love me because they take care of me when I am sick.
Sydney: I am thankful for the world because those people love me.
Gabe: I am thankful for turkey because I like to eat turkey on Thanksgiving.
Caysen: I am thankful for the world because I can clean it up.
Sam: I am thankful for snakes because they eat the bugs I don't really like.
Sydney: I am thankful for my mom and my dad because they love me. I am thankful for my cats because they keep me company.
Alexander: I am thankful for my family when they play with me. I am thankful for my friends when they play with me.
Nevoeh: I am thankful for the butterflies hoo fly in the sky. I am thankful for my teacher because she helps me.
Zander: I am thankful for dad and mom because they take me to grandmas.
Julie: I am thankful for Jasmine because she is special.
Zach: I am thankful for my dad because he taught me how to play foot ball. My skills have improved since my first time playing foot ball.
Luke: I am thankful for turkey because my grandma makes it. It is good with gravy.
Miguel: I am thankful for my family because they love me. I love my family

too.
Kiarra: I am thankful for my mom because she takes me to the park.
Aimyia: I am thankful for a family that loves me. I'm thankful for my friends that play with me.
Leah: I am thankful for my family. They help me with my art work.
Micah: I am thankful for my school because they teach me stuff.
Allison: I am thankful for my family. They make me laugh.
David: I am thankful for Thanksgiving, hot chocolate and my grandma.
Riley: I am thankful for my room and toys. I like to watch TV in my room.
Jace: I am thankful for Christmas because you get presents.
Madyson Knouse: I am very thankful for my dog because I get to play with her every day.
Katie Szczesny: I am very thankful for my mom. She lets me have a princess party.
Abigail Sloan: I am very thankful for my family! They love me.
Payton Silvernail: I am very thankful for my whole entire family. I love them very much. They are all nice to me.
Alexis Aune: I am very thankful for my new house. It is my Christmas present.
Milo Johnson: I am very thankful for my family and my house because they take care of me.
Karli Kotab: I am very thankful for being able to go to Omaha for my birthday!!!
Ally Lande: I am very thankful for America. Every one is very helpful.
Connor Briest: I am very thankful for my mom and dad. I get love.
Michael Parish: I am very thankful for my freedoms. So I don't need to listen to the mean king of England. I am happy.
C. J. Van Gerpen: I am very thankful for our veterans. They fought for our freedom.
Ariel Bender: I am very thankful for

my friends. They are nice to me.
Brandon Cap: I am very thankful for my family. They love me.
Aidan Matias: I am very thankful for my mom. I get to play cards.
Carson Heinemeyer: I am very thankful for my family. They love me.
Tanner Rohde: I am very thankful for my family. They love me.
Gavin Swanson: I am very thankful for America. People are kind.
Marause Spotted Eagle: I am very thankful for my mom. She loves me.

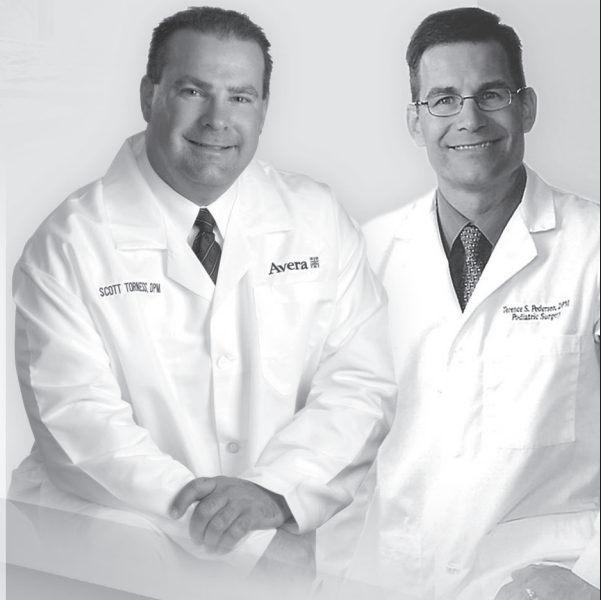
NOVEMBER IS AMERICAN DIABETES MONTH

Take Care of Your Feet

COME TO A SPECIAL SCREENING FOR DIABETICS



It's important for people with diabetes to prevent foot problems so they don't cause serious health conditions. During American Diabetes Month, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital is offering free foot screenings for diabetics.



Diabetic Foot Screenings

Wednesday, Nov. 30
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Professional Office Pavilion
Second Floor
Avera Sacred Heart Hospital

Podiatrists Terence Pedersen and Scott Torness, with the assistance of medical students, will screen patients. Drs. Pedersen and Torness will present important information about diabetic foot care at 11 a.m., and massage therapists will give massages in line as people wait for their screenings. No appointment is necessary.

Avera
Sacred Heart Hospital

Look no further.

(605) 668-8000 ■ www.AveraSacredHeart.org

Area Students to Perform at Washington Pavilion

As part of Christmas at Augustana, the Department of Performing and Visual Arts presents the Christmas Extravaganza, a holiday concert featuring the Augustana Brass Choir, The Augustana Band, and the Augustana College/Community Concert Band at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 8, at the Washington Pavilion in historic downtown Sioux Falls.

The following area students will perform:
Kristin Waltner (Flute, Augustana Band), Freeman
Tyson Lager (Cornet, Augustana Band), Freeman
Ariel Tjaden (Bass Clarinet, College/Community Band), Freeman
Kaycee Michael (French Horn,

Augustana Band), Yankton
Gabrielle Kachena (Flute, College/Community Band), Yankton
The concert will include the world premiere of a new Christmas piece titled "Holiday Classics" (volume one) by Augustana

alumnus Jeremy Hegg.
The concert will conclude with the world premiere of "Holiday Classics" (Volume One) by Jeremy Hegg, performed by the Brass Choir, Augustana Band, and College/Community Band.



Stop In or Call

to visit with **Santa Sonnie**
about decorating your home or
office for the holidays.



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Share your best work by submitting your recipe to us!

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SOUPS & STEWS

For our upcoming January/February HerVoice Magazine

Deadline: December 15 Watch to see if your recipe has been selected!

Please include baking/cooking times and number of people the recipe will serve.

Send Recipes To: Press & Dakotan HerVoice Recipes
Attn: Cathy Sudbeck
319 Walnut, Yankton SD 57078
or email to: cathy.sudbeck@yankton.net

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