



# Tips and Tools for a Healthy Year

How are you getting ready for the new year? As we all stand at the beginning of 365 days full of potential, it's exciting. And maybe a little overwhelming. These suggestions can help you fulfill the new year's potential in ways that will keep your mind and body healthy:

- Review the past year to recall all the things you did well and to learn from your mistakes. Put together a list of habits and activities you want to keep doing and another list of areas you would like to improve.
- Re-engage with your sponsor.
- As part of your daily inventory, review any issues or family matters that may have popped up over the holidays. Page 86 of the Big Book includes these questions, which can serve as a guide to taking inventory: "Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?"
- If you were exposed to drinking or drugs over the holidays, take an inventory of how that felt and share it with someone else who is in recovery. Engaging with others in recovery and your community of support is a good way to keep track of your relapse triggers and prevent any possibility of relapse. Caron is always available to help.
- Resolve to keep to your schedule of meetings, therapy, and that daily inventory.
- Have fun. Seriously. January and February can often seem like a grind. We return to work. The weather is generally awful. What fun activities can you set up? Look for local activities that you enjoy—whether it's ice skating or joining a book group or something else. Or get adventurous with something new. Indoor rock climbing or scuba diving? What about dance or cooking classes? If it's in your budget, head somewhere warm for a few days vacation or find a cozy cabin with friends who support your recovery and enjoy a winter retreat.
- Make a list of your strengths and review and add to it periodically. Paying attention to and recognizing our strengths can help us create healthy attitudes and healthy lives. After all, those strengths are going to get us through day to day.
- Keep a daily gratitude list. David DeSteno, a professor of psychology at Northeastern University, recently wrote a column in The New York Times that described how gratitude, confidence, and compassion can increase self-control, slow your heart rate, and lower your blood pressure, and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. They can also, he notes, combat loneliness.
- Be mindful of your mood. Whether it's holiday letdown or something more serious like seasonal affectiveness disorder, this time of year can be hard to get through for anyone. Find out from your therapist or another professional what steps you can take to deal with how you are feeling.
- Get more sleep (seven to nine hours is a good goal). A good night's sleep reduces stress and keeps you healthier mentally and physically.
- Take up a new kind of exercise. For example, yoga can help reduce stress and provide space for meditation and exercise. Walking is easy and free and also offers up an opportunity to reflect and meditate.
- Volunteer. There are plenty of people who need all kinds of help and support. And volunteering is a great way to improve your mental health.
- Make new friends. Who around you is a good role model/positive influence? Who makes you feel better? Make plans to have coffee or a meal with people who can support you and whose company you enjoy.
- Renew ties with family members and/or old friends who can support you in your recovery work.