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Health fads come and go but the Four Pillars of Health have stood the test of time. These four pillars are **food, activity, sleep and rest**. This means eating nutritious foods, being physically and mentally active, getting good quality and adequate sleep, and finally, giving our bodies and minds the rest they deserve.

Many of us will make New Year's resolutions year after year that we will eat better, be more active, sleep more and work on our mental stress, but we end up going back to our old habits soon after we decide to do otherwise. Sometimes it is because the resolutions are too complex. Other times, we don't have a clear plan to achieve them. Then there are times when we simply don't give them the priority and commitment they deserve. To ensure success, keep goals SMART – **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime Bound. These are principles from the business world that are surprisingly effective in setting and achieving health goals.

Specific – What do you want to accomplish? It should be direct, detailed and meaningful.

Measurable – How will you know when you have reached it? It should be quantifiable to track progress or success.

Attainable – Is it in your power to accomplish it? You should have the tools and resources to attain it.

Realistic – Can you realistically achieve it? Your circumstances and environment should allow you to achieve it.

Time Bound – When exactly do you want to accomplish it? It should have a deadline.

Let's apply the SMART method to one of the Four Pillars of Health.

Food: Your goal is "I will eat healthier this year". This is not specific – what is "healthier"? It is not measurable – how will you determine if you have eaten healthier? It may or may not be attainable or realistic since the definition of "healthier" is so vague. It is also not time bound – is it for every day for the entire year or for five days of the week?

You see how difficult it is to achieve goals that are not SMART. Let us convert the statement "I will eat healthier this year" to multiple SMART goals.

"I will eat two servings of vegetables with each lunch and dinner".

"I will limit sugary drinks to one per week".

"I will limit fast food restaurant meals to one every two weeks".

The above goals are SMART – they are specific, you can measure what you're doing, they are attainable, they are realistic and time bound.

Make a resolution for each of the Four Pillars of Health. Then convert each resolution into a set of SMART goals. Write these down, make a commitment to yourself and your family, track your progress, revel in your success. This year, be SMART about your health.

A Happy New Year to you all! And the very best of health!