

January 15th, 2015

Release: Sticking to New-Year Plans Requires Resolve, say Counsellors

The new year is a time for resolutions, but a failure to plan properly for these major lifestyle changes means many people do not achieve their goals, according to the Irish Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP).

The association, which represents almost 4,000 accredited counsellors and psychotherapists across the country, has said that keeping resolutions can be difficult because people don't think through what they want to achieve.

"You need to think about where you are now, where you want to be and how you are going to get there. It's a good idea to write down your goals and the plan that you have to reach it," said Shane Kelly, spokesman with the IACP.

"You also need to plan out each small step you need to take to reach your goal - what is the first step or action that you need to start moving towards your goal," he added.

One of the main difficulties facing people who make new-year resolutions is that their plans are not specific enough, according to the IACP. As an example, the association advised against making very broad goals such as losing weight when a more appropriate goal would be to lose three kilos.

Seeking to achieve unrealistic or unattainable goals or trying to achieve a number of goals at the same time could easily demoralise and affect the motivation of people who make resolutions. Instead, the IACP advised that people make slow and steady progress.

"Don't try to change too many things at once. Choose one goal at a time – and take your time. The bigger your goal or change you want to make, the smaller the steps you should take to reach it," Mr Kelly said.

"Make small, realistic targets and take small steps towards them. Each small step forward is bringing you closer to your goal. Don't expect to change everything overnight, it takes time to reach goals," he added.

The IACP also said that slow progress was better than no progress and that even if a person had a slip-up, this should not be viewed negatively.

"Be nice to yourself, don't be too critical and try to see the positive aspects of what you're doing - you can expect to have some bad days, but don't be hard on yourself if you don't stick to your plan 100%," said Mr Kelly.

"Remember what you did do right and try again tomorrow with new motivation. It's helpful if you write down your progress, no matter how small, and over time you will see what you are achieving," he added.

The IACP added that family and friends' support was crucial and that they could play a big role in helping a relative or colleague to achieve their resolution.

"Don't start tomorrow, start now, but most of all, enjoy it," Mr Kelly added.

For a list of accredited counsellors and psychotherapists in your area, visit www.iacp.ie

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For more information, contact Richard Brophy, OHC on 086 385 3260 / email: rbrophy@ohcpr.ie

About the IACP:

Established in 1981, the IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy through education, training and accreditation. In promoting best practice and the professional development of its members, IACP holds at its core the protection of the public. Representing both the interests of clients and practitioners, IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).