

Drop and give me '10

More resolving to exercise body than exercise vices

By Lauren Beckham Falcone | Sunday, January 3, 2010 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Fitness & Nutrition

Can the recession kill the New Year's resolution?

You'd think after a year of decimated 401(k)s, declining bottom lines, layoffs and general ennui, people would cling to their vices like your great aunt holds a grudge.

After all, you've given up so much in 2009 - vacations, pay raises, five-day work weeks - why should you quit smoking, eating chips and whiling away time on Facebook?

Yet, even in these sour economic times, there's one thing that won't recede: the collective urge each January to start anew.

"I've hired a personal trainer," said Cameron Sperance, 21, a junior at **Boston College**. "Recession or not, I want a better body."

Adam Gecht, area manager of Equinox fitness centers in Boston, said gym memberships are going strong and he expects even more members this month.



Photo by Nancy Lane

"Very few people have canceled their gym memberships this year," he said. "In fact, I think since some people lost their jobs, they're here more often. Plus, it's social and fun."

Gecht is confident the resolution won't be another casualty of a lousy economy.

"I think the economy has plateaued, and Bank of America just moved in to the fourth floor of one of our locations, so that's only going to help membership," he said. "Plus, people always want to lose weight and get healthy in the new year. It'll pick up in January and February and get back to normal come spring."

Boston College professor and psychologist Joseph Tecce said he's not surprised people still make resolutions, even if they're miserable.

"Just don't make one that's going to make you unhappy," he said. "Everyone in life needs a vice, just make sure it's not fatal. If you gave up everything that makes you happy for the new year, you're going to be one disgruntled person come February."

The trick, Tecce said, is to make a resolution to help someone else and make sure it doesn't cost you anything.

"Make a resolution to visit a friend you haven't seen or take time to talk to that relative you lost touch with," he said. "It's the resolution with a double lining. You make someone happy, then you're happy."

And if you're happy, odds are you won't drown yourself in pizza and may actually feel like taking that much-needed walk.

Debbie Mandel, author of "Addicted to Stress" (Wiley, \$22.95), wrote in an e-mail that, rather than give up on resolutions, many people have already started working on them because of the recession.

"(People are) keeping it simple, avoiding debt and reconnecting with friends and community - as well as re-appreciating the value of health and fitness," she wrote. "New Year's resolutions for many would be redundant. However, it is important to note that stress makes us revert to old bad habits. While you might not be able to manage the big stressors in life just yet, it is important to manage the little stressors which accumulate and can create a tipping point."

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