

# Making SMART Resolutions

## *Tips for Helping Plan Effective, Attainable Resolutions*

**Tampa, FL – January 20, 2008** – The beginning of the New Year always brings about the desire to set goals in an attempt to better oneself, or one's life. However, many resolution makers find themselves returning to their old habits by the First of February. The key to setting attainable goals depends on the attainability of such goals and how the goals are set.

**April Lott, LCSW, Community Treatment Director at Directions for Mental Health in Clearwater**, advises that making SMART resolutions is the key:

**S – Specific**

The goal should include details not only about what the goal is, but the steps that will help attain that goal.

**M – Measurable**

The progress one makes in achieving the goal must be measurable by some set of standards.

**A – Attainable**

The goal must be something that one can achieve with a realistic amount of work and effort.

**R – Realistic**

The goal should be able to met without harm to one's health or well-being.

**T – Time Table**

Goal setters should include a time frame for achieving their end goal with several benchmarks which monitor progress and encourage completion.

An example of an un-SMART resolution would be to lose 50 pounds in four months. First, this goal is not specific enough. What tools and new habits will be used to reach this goal? The goal should have more measurable standards, losing five pounds a month is much easier to measure and track. Losing such a large amount of weight in such a small amount of time is unrealistic and unattainable for most, especially without harmful side effects. There is a time table included, but it is unrealistic and doesn't include any measurable benchmarks.

A SMART version of the same goal would be to lose a total of 50 pounds over 10 months, with five pounds a month being the benchmark goal. The resolution maker should also include: better eating habits, exercise, and other lifestyle changes that will help them achieve this goal as a part of their overall resolution. Once a SMART resolution has been made, that is only the beginning of making the right choices to achieve that goal.

“Too often, people fall off the wagon and either procrastinate getting back on track, or they just give up completely,” points out Lott. People aren’t perfect; therefore, expecting to consistently maintain resolution goals is unrealistic. The important thing to remember when one does make a mistake, or two, is that it’s important to get back on track as soon as possible. Don’t wait until Monday to restart your program, start tomorrow or even better as soon as you fumble.

It’s a time-honored tradition to set one or more New Year’s resolutions. The beginning of the year provides people with a desire to bring change into their lives and also provides a memorable start date for new habits and/or lifestyles so long as the resolutions are SMART ones. However, one doesn’t have to wait for the next year to set new resolutions and begin to make positive changes in their lives. Why wait for next year when you can start today?

**About Directions for Mental Health Inc.**

Directions for Mental Health, Inc., established in 1982, is a non-profit organization committed to helping heal the hurt in the lives of thousands of Pinellas County residents suffering from—or at risk of—mental illness. With nationally accredited programs, Directions sets the standard for best practices in mental health treatment, while making mental health care affordable and accessible to individuals and families, and building a safer, healthier community. Serving more than 8,000 people per year, Directions is dedicated to developing innovative programs that change lives, while reducing crime, homelessness, drug abuse and child abuse.

For questions about mental illness and programs, visit Directions for Mental Health’s website at [www.directionsmh.org](http://www.directionsmh.org) or call (727) 524-4464 extension 1700.