



ABC CLARION

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New Year's Resolutions Worth Trying

by Victoria Tian

At this point, New Year's resolutions have become extremely predictable and next-to-impossible for the average person to execute. The dream of losing weight vanishes after you stop going to the gym for six months. Managing stress is forgotten after you go back to school and become inundated with homework and projects. Instead of trying to fulfill empty promises, here are some ideas that are both manageable and meaningful to accomplish for 2016.

1. Keep a journal. You don't need to write in it every day, or even every month. Just document all of the special events that occur in your life next year. Later on, you will be thankful to have the opportunity to look back on past memories and the thoughts of your past self.

2. Laugh more. Although it may

not necessarily be the best medicine, laughter has been shown to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and release feel-good endorphins. You would be improving yourself physically and emotionally by letting out more chuckles. Life is too short to be serious all the time, so do not be afraid to laugh at yourself when you make mistakes or use humor to change your perspective on darker situations.

3. Give yourself to a needy cause. Choose an issue that you believe in strongly, and do whatever you can to help out. Volunteer for an organization in your spare time. If you have a busy schedule, donate some money to the cause instead. If nothing else, spread the word to friends and family by mouth or social media so they can help out too. By doing

so, you will feel better about yourself and what you are doing to make a difference.

4. Get more sleep. Our sleep-deprived selves are mere shells of who we really could be. More snooze helps you feel better and be more productive, and chances are, you probably aren't getting enough of it in the first place. You can achieve this resolution by going to bed a half-hour earlier, taking more naps during the day, or just procrastinating less and losing the late-night Netflix habit.

5. Strengthen your social relationships. People come in and out of your life more quickly than you think, so try to tell them how much they truly mean to you. This can be a teacher who really changed your life or a friend who has been with you through thick and thin. You can also opt to re-

connect with old friends who you have lost touch with for a while. Doing so will make you feel much happier.

6. Find ways to love yourself. This is more important than losing weight or wearing more stylish clothing. Once you start embracing your true qualities (weirdness, quirks, and all) and accepting who

you are, your entire life will change for the better. You will no longer be affected as much by your insecurities and have a higher chance of achieving all the goals you set for yourself. Additionally, you will not feel the need to envy others or feel the pressure to conform to the people around you. This confidence will make you really shine in 2016.

Rabies Alert

by Victor Zhang

Though it may seem like a thing of the past, rabies is still very much alive and with us, in places we may not expect. With a fatality rate of near one hundred percent, it is the deadliest virus on Earth.

Earlier this month, a groundhog tested positive for rabies, officials say. Spotted near Raritan Blvd and Pomona Blvd in Keyport, it was found alive, lying on its back. Local officials are cautioning residents in the Middlesex region to be careful and to report any animals suspected of carrying the rabies virus.

This is the tenth animal found to test positive for rabies in Middlesex this year, officials say. Four have been found in South Brunswick; one in North Brunswick; one in Monroe Township; three in East Brunswick.

However, the number of rabid animals in our area may be higher. "These are just the ones that are found," said Health Director Tom Sikorski. "Rabies is throughout the state of New Jersey, particularly in bats and raccoons." Sikorski, the health director of Old Bridge, estimates that for every case of rabies, there are perhaps twenty or more that are undiscovered.

Often referred to as "hydrophobia," rabies is mainly spread through contact with saliva from infected animals. Rabies can lie dormant in the body for months, or even years. However, when symptoms develop, there is little hope for survival. Characterized by foaming at the mouth and difficulty

swallowing, rabies patients often live only seven days after the onset of symptoms, as the virus infects the brain stem and disrupts vital life activities.

Middlesex residents are advised to follow these guidelines to avoid catching this deadly disease:

1. Immediately report a bite from a wild or domestic animal to your local health department. Although it may not seem like it, reporting an incident can help authorities track down and isolate rabid animals that may pose a threat to humans and pets.

2. Immediately report any wild animal showing signs of unusual behavior. Signs of unusual animal behavior include moving slowly, acting as if it is tame, appearing sick, have problems swallowing, having a large amount of saliva, acting aggressively, or having difficulty moving.

3. Wash animal bite wounds thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible. Contamination of open cuts or scratches with saliva of potentially rabid animals should also be washed off immediately.

4. If you think you have been bitten by a rabid animal, get the rabies shot immediately. Getting vaccinated while the virus is still incubating is the best way to prevent yourself from being infected by rabies.

Although it may seem like a scary disease, modern advances in science have given us the ability to survive and live productive lives, even if we've come in contact with rabies.

Allergic to Fruits and Vegetables?

by Alena Zhang

You take a bite of your apple. There's a satisfying crunch when you bite in, and the juice from the apple hits your tongue. You munch on the crispy innards of the apple. Then you swallow. But before you can take another bite, your mouth begins to tingle. Your throat starts itching and closing up. You put the apple down, but by now your lips are so itchy that you want to claw them off.

This experience is common for people who experience OAS, which is also known as Oral Allergy Syndrome. Fresh fruit, raw vegetables, and raw nuts are the most common causes of OAS. The body has a hard time differentiating between plant proteins from pollen and those from produce. Certain proteins are falsely recognized as invaders, and the body launches an allergic reaction to fight them off.

Those with Oral Allergy Syndrome are typically allergic to birch, ragweed, or grass pollens. Birch pollen is the biggest offender; 50% to 75% of people allergic to birch pollen have been found to also have OAS. Those who are sensitive to birch pollen may be allergic to apples, almonds,

carrots, celery, cherries, hazelnuts, kiwis, peaches, pears, or plums. Interestingly enough, not everyone with OAS is allergic to the same foods: different proteins can cause different reactions. For example, someone allergic to grass pollen could have a reaction to celery, melons, oranges, peaches, or tomatoes.

In general, symptoms of OAS are mild -- they typically start within a couple of minutes of eating and settle down within an hour. Specifically, symptoms can include an itchy mouth, scratchy throat, or swelling in the lips, mouth, tongue, and throat. Itchy ears are also a possibility, since the throat and ears are connected by a narrow passage called the Eustachian tube. In addition, OAS symptoms may intensify during specific times of the year because plants are more active during the fall and spring pollen seasons.

Although there are no permanent cures for OAS, there are several precautions one can take to prevent itching and swelling. An easy course of action is to peel fruits and vegetables before eating them. The cross-reactive pollens are most often concentrated on the outer

skin of produce so peeling will remove as many allergens as possible.

In addition, cooking fruits and vegetables can prevent symptoms from arising. High heat breaks down the proteins and changes their chemical identity, so the body no will longer recognize the proteins as invaders. For instance, those allergic to apples can eat applesauce, apple pie, or sauteed apples without triggering allergy symptoms.

OAS can change also over time -- I was once allergic to raw peaches, but now I can eat them without triggering any symptoms. I often fear that I'm missing out on vitamins from fruit, so sometimes I'll stick it out and let my mouth itch a little while I munch on an apple. Despite the irritations caused by OAS, I've found many alternative routes to include raw fruits and vegetables in my diet.



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