

The SMART way

If you've set yourself New Year's resolutions in 2010 that you haven't yet fulfilled, don't despair.

Failing to get your goals in motion by the end of the first week of January can be demoralising — but it's no reason for saying 'Bah humbug' to making resolutions and goals for the rest of the year.

The key to successfully making changes in your personal and professional life lies in following what Cork-based life coach and stress management consultant Therese Ryan describes as the 'Smart' principle.

She says the New Year is the perfect time to stop and reflect on what you've achieved in the past and think about what you can achieve in the future.

"Last year was a bad year for a lot of people who lost their jobs and felt that control was being taken away from them," said Therese.

"A lot of people found themselves on a kind of roller-coaster and there's been a real sense of fear and uncertainty affecting people and it's mostly related to financial security."

"If ever there was a need for people to stop and set some goals or make a resolution for the year ahead, it's now."

The life coach, who is director of Renewal Consultants in Cork, said it was important to think about how you can make the year ahead work for you — rather than simply being affected by things are out of your control.

"Instead of staring into an abyss at the start of the year, I advise people to think about what they want to achieve — and can realistically achieve — in the current climate.

"No matter what kind of change it is you want to make, whether it's personal or professional, I recommend that clients follow the 'Smart' principle," she said.

The five elements of the Smart principle that Therese recommends are:

- **Specific** — be clear about what you want to achieve.
- **Measurable** — make sure you can assess your progress in achieving your goal.
- **Achievable** — choose a goal that is suitable and appropriate to your lifestyle.
- **Realistic** — ask yourself whether you're realistically going to be able to keep working towards your goal.
- **Timely** — be sure it's the right time to make the change.

"Whether it's getting fit and healthy, losing weight, giving up smoking, changing career or even spending more time with your



Our New Year, New You series continues as MARIA ROLSTON talks to a life coach who has a formula for achieving success in your 2010 resolutions



SEIZE THE DAY: Cork-based life coach and stress management consultant Therese Ryan says now is the time to stop, reflect and set some goals or make a resolution for the year ahead.

family, make sure to reality test your goals. You're therefore less likely to give up and fail," said Therese.

"It takes an average of 21 days or three weeks to develop a new habit — that's why it's important set up step-by-step achievement blocks and measure your progress.

"Break your goals down into the long, short and medium-term.

"Lifestyle change isn't short-term. It's about incorporating a new habit, which can feel very strange at the start but which eventually becomes part of your life.

"You need to introduce the change in a way that you can actually keep up. But it's also important to remember that even if you don't get it right this time — that's okay.

"The key thing is that if you have a bad week, you have to adapt so that it doesn't become a bad month. You can do this by following the 'Smart' principle.

"To make it happen, write it down so that you commit to it and set yourself dates for doing the things you're going to do.

"Put little motivational stickers up around the house, reminding yourself that you can do what it is you're setting out to do.

"Everyone needs to feel they've achieved something at the end of each week so reward yourself when you reach a target. It helps with motivation to keep moving towards your goal.

"Making changes may feel hard at the start but you should always focus on the outcome and think about why it is you're doing what you're doing. Keep that at the front of your mind," she said.

The life coach, career change and performance and wellbeing expert says that adopting a positive outlook while maintaining a realistic perspective is imperative.

"There's so much doom and

gloom out there that I think we need to change our outlook. We should focus on the fact that statistics are saying that 85% of people are in employment rather than the fact that we now have 15% unemployed.

"I do believe the festive season and New Year are, in their nature, very positive.

"But nobody makes things positive for us. You've often got to make things positive for yourself.

"The 'Smart' principle can help you create a plan for how you're going to achieve your goals."

"Resolutions are about doing something for yourself and I think they're important because it's about taking control and making things happen for yourself — and that brings a real sense of achievement and is highly rewarding."

● For more information on making life changes see www.renewalconsultants.ie

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