



## FIVE HEALTHIER CHOICES FOR 2017

*Like Cinderella shedding her ballgown and glass slippers at the stroke of midnight, many of us see the heralding of a new year as the chance to start afresh. Unlike Cinderella who shed her finery for tatty rags, our metamorphosis is usually a positive transformation. We shed the regrets, mental clutter and negativity of the old year and embrace creativity, productivity and a fresh outlook.*

In order to see the impact these changes can have on you and on your life, you must make a firm commitment to see them through.

### Five positive changes for 2017



#### 1. Deal with stress

Ending the old year with high stress levels, possibly close to burnout, is a reality for many. It's often a combination of working hard to complete tasks before the December shut down and feeling exhausted because we haven't taken enough rest opportunities through the year. "Added to this are the financial implications that the end of the year brings which further adds to stress," says educational psychologist Colleen

Johnson. "Going forward into the new year, make managing stress a priority. Managing stress is vital as it helps us to stay focused and productive without feeling exhausted."

To get a handle on your stress, adopt the following habits:

- Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise (at least five times a week for 30 minutes or more).
- Manage your time effectively and prioritise. Keep a diary to help you keep track.
- Try to arrange regular, short breaks throughout the year instead of waiting for your annual leave.
- Learn to say no!

- During the course of the work day get up every 30 or 40 minutes and go for a brief walk before resuming your work.
- Don't spend too much time engaged with technology, learn to switch off.

If you continue to suffer from the effects of stress despite implementing these and other positive behaviours and habits, it may be time to speak to a healthcare professional or a counsellor. Contact your employee wellbeing programme for further guidance and assistance.



#### 2. Chuck the junk

Professional life coach and author of the best-selling book **Clear Your Clutter**, Kate

Emmerson's motto of *Live Light, Live Large* is about creating space in your life by letting go of clutter. "Start off 2017 by doing a declutter of your life," says Kate "Think body (anything stealing your va va voom and vitality), emotional (the stuff that makes us play small and wounds us), mental (crazy overfilled headspace that has no room for creativity and productivity), spiritual (whatever holds you back from being light and connected) and physical, all the stuff we hold onto that we can see, touch and feel."

Contemplate your year ahead and think about the things that may hold you back – an attitude, a way of thinking, a person – anything that would be better left behind.

"Look at every aspect of life," says Kate. "Do a deep cleanse, a purge and a spring clean to come out on the other side refreshed, renewed and ready to put your year's intention into place."



### 3. Make it positive

Jannie Putter, mental coach for the Blue Bulls says that changing how you view certain situations is a conscious choice only you can make. "You can choose whether you see the hole in the doughnut or the doughnut itself," says Jannie. "The benefit of a challenge or just the challenge itself. If you can start to practice this habit you will soon find yourself becoming an optimist instead of a realist or pessimist."

Dream big for the year, but set achievable goals with small, manageable steps that will help you get closer to that dream. "Becoming a Springbok rugby-player isn't a goal," says Jannie. "That is not in your power to control! If it is your dream, your goal could be along the lines of running the 100m in less than 11 seconds, mastering the skill of the side-step or passing the ball to both sides. These goals are within your control and you can do it over and over again until you are a master. Later, if you are good enough and the opportunities arrive, perhaps you will be selected for the squad."

Smaller goals allow you to see a measure of success and motivate you to work on the next goal towards your dream.

### 4. Choose better health



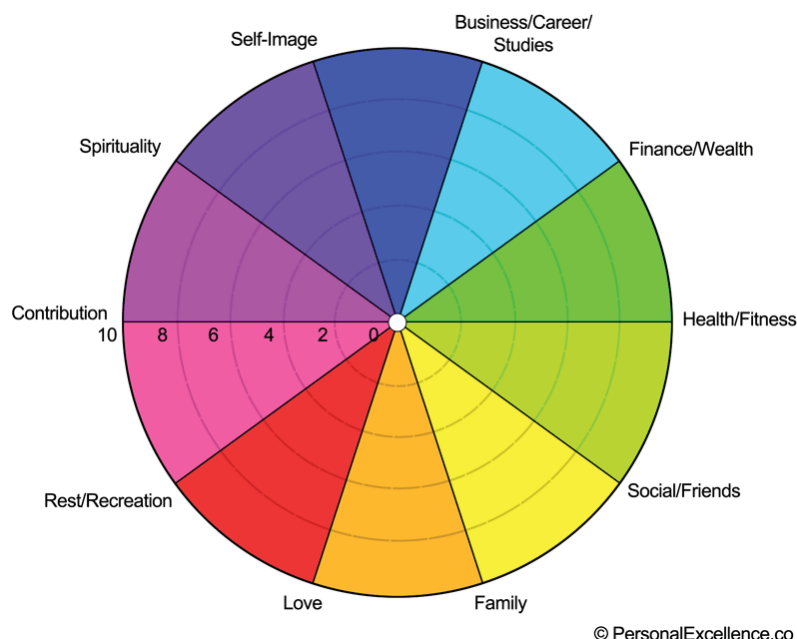
You may already have losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight on your list of resolutions. Don't see this as losing weight, but rather gaining health. Approaching this from a more positive mindset can help you to make the changes that can really improve your health.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND THE WHEEL OF LIFE

*Awareness is the first step towards creating boundaries between work and home as well as greater strength and resilience.*

*"The Wheel of Life is a great tool for helping you create more balance in your life," says Elmien. "It is often used in coaching and is a great foundation exercise when you want to set goals for the New Year."*

*Divide the Wheel of Life into categories that are important to you – business/career, family and friends, romance, personal growth, finance, fun and recreation and any others you want to include. Rank your level of satisfaction in each area and identify where you need to set boundaries, focus more or less attention and create goals.*



René Smalberger, a registered dietician, suggests a three-step plan for healthier living:

- Reduce the intake of fats in your diet. Try to remove all visible fats from meats and chicken before you cook them, and change to low fat dairy products. However, be careful to check that they have not replaced the fat in the dairy products with added sugar.
- Reduce the intake of sugar in your diet. Limit cold drinks that contain sugar, reduce the amount you use in tea and coffee, and reduce the portion size of treats such as sweets and chocolates.
- Have regular small meals throughout the day. The ideal is three meals and three snacks every day. This is difficult and takes plenty of daily discipline, but it is important for maintaining energy levels and keeping your metabolism functioning at its best.

### 5. Strive for work-life balance

Struggling to achieve a good work-life balance can leave you feeling depressed, guilty and stressed out. "When you have too many responsibilities with too few boundaries, you burn out and you may slide into depression and have little energy, motivation or interest in life," says counselling psychologist, Elmien Butler. "In a worst-case scenario, relationships at work and in your personal life fall apart and you may need medical treatment."

Awareness is the first step towards creating positive boundaries at work and at home, as well as between work and home.

"The Wheel of Life (see above) is a great tool for helping you create more balance in your life," says Elmien. "It is often used in coaching and is a great foundation exercise when you want to set goals for the New Year."