



THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES OF NORTH TEXAS

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IHF Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1

January 1, 2008

Healthy Habits for 2008

by Sandra W. Froese, Ed.D., LPC-S

With 2008 suddenly upon us, it is time to look forward to a brand new year! Resolutions are out, but goals are in! (I never did like resolutions anyway, because they tend to be discarded with last week's Christmas wrapping paper, never to be thought of again.)

Goals, however, give us an opportunity to look to the future and make necessary changes in behavior and attitudes that are value-added. Goals allow us to discard old habits and make way for new ones. Goals can be measured in small and large increments. For example, if you are "dreaming" of owning your own home or purchasing a new car, it isn't enough to sit around "wishing" for something to happen. With the housing market down, this might be the best time for you to get a good deal on owning your own home—provided that you have a good credit record and a good job with sufficient income for the monthly mortgage payments.

Goals can be broken down into steps or objectives with an end result in sight. If you set a goal to own your own home, think about all the steps that are involved. Begin with "research, research, research."

1. Research the costs of owning your own home, i.e., mortgage payments, real estate taxes, closing costs, homeowners insurance, maintenance and upkeep, etc.
2. Research the desirable places to live within your income level. Pass up the "high dollar" real estate.
3. Research the amount of money you will need to save for a down payment (Read 10 to 20% for a down payment!), and check your credit record to determine if you are eligible for home ownership.
4. Research the current market and become knowledgeable about interest rates and points for a mortgage.
5. Add up your assets and liabilities, and then start a savings account now with the best rate of return for that down payment and closing costs. Check on your life and health insurance coverage to determine if you have enough.
6. Find ways that you can cut current expenses to save for a down payment. Can you give up "eating out" and saving that money for your down payment? Can you forgo an expensive vacation this year?
7. Find a location that meets the needs of your family. Is it close to schools, churches, shopping?
8. Determine how much house you can afford to purchase so that you won't be faced with a decision to sell because you are living beyond your means.
9. Contact a reputable realtor to guide you in your search. Beware of contacting a salesperson for a company that sells houses! They are only in it for the commission—not in your best interests.
10. Look for a house that has "good bones" and will appreciate in value. Allow three to six months to complete your search for just the right home.

You can apply this same process of purchasing a home to any goal-setting activity that you desire. If you or anyone in your family needs counseling for a career change or personal counseling to address losses or changes in your life, check out our web site at www.texasicounselors.com. Our rates are affordable.