**Haldeman’s Family Resolution Plan**

For many of us, the New Year means it's time to take stock of our lives and fix what we don't like. Whether it's our diet, exercise routine or tendency to procrastinate, there is always room for improvement in the coming year. We not only benefit from New Year's resolutions; our children can also learn a lot about self-discipline and the value of making goals. Here are some tips on how to help your kids benefit from making resolutions.

**Make It a Family Activity**

* The best way to teach your children the importance of New Year's resolutions is by making it part of the family tradition.
* Sit down each December and reflect on the past year, discussing your accomplishments and goals, as individuals and as a family. In your resolution conversation you can each talk about what worked this year and what didn't.
* Each family member gets a turn sharing something they are proud of and something they want to improve. It may help for parents to go first, to give children a model. If your child is old enough to write, he or she should write down their accomplishments and goals, and you can help your younger child by writing theirs down.
* Resolutions for the entire family might include taking a monthly hike, playing board games twice a month or committing to more volunteering activities. Try to limit the number so they are more doable and more meaningful
* You can make a master list to hang in a public spot, like a bulletin board in the kitchen.

**Different Resolutions for Different Ages**

What your child needs to work on depends on your child. If you are concerned about his diet, then encourage healthier eating habits for him as well as the whole family. If your daughter's room is a mess, try to help her commit 10 minutes a day to cleaning it. As your child ages, he can be more active in coming up with goals, which will mean more to him when he achieves them.

* For preschool-aged children, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends resolutions that focus on cleaning up toys, brushing teeth and washing hands and being kind to pets. However, parents who consider these behaviors part of their regular expectations may want to provide resolutions that focus on higher goals. They could be encouraged to work on listening and helping skills. A resolution could be "I will be a better listener when Mommy or Daddy asks me to do something" or "I will help out more when Mommy or Daddy asks me." If you keep it simple, your child is more likely to understand the concept as well as succeed.
* As a child reaches age five and up to age 12, he or she is more able to comprehend a resolution and participate more in the process of picking one. What your child needs to work on is very personal, so work with your child to come up with areas for improvement. Is she having trouble with a certain subject at school that needs more attention? Is he oversleeping and nearly missing the bus most mornings?
* When your child gets into adolescence, some recommendations for this age group could be for the child to take more responsibility for his actions, including taking care of his body, dealing with stress in a healthy way, talking through conflict, resisting drugs and alcohol and helping others through community service.

**Serve as a Role Model**

No matter what age your child is, he or she is more likely to understand the value of goal setting if you take the lead. Just as with everything else you do, your child is watching.

Think of how you can include your child in your resolution. "I'm going to drink more water this year, because water is good for me. Do you want to join me?" If you are finding yourself checking your e-mail when you should be spending time as a family, consider incorporating that into a goal. "I'm going to turn off my phone when I get home. Can you remind me and also remember to keep your computer in your room until after dinnertime?"

**Rewards Are Long Lasting**

We all know the feeling of meeting a goal, whether it’s exercising more, losing five pounds, quitting smoking or putting in extra hours to earn a promotion.

Children also relish that thrill of accomplishment, especially when their parents are acknowledging it. As you go over the family list of resolutions each month or quarter, take time to acknowledge the successes, along with reinforcing the resolutions that need more attention.

Children will benefit by having the parent praise them, which will improve their self-esteem. This will help them with self-regulatory behaviors that they can integrate into being a healthy adult.

When you sit down to review resolutions, this is not time for punishment, however. It's important to be flexible and understanding, especially if the child is making the effort. Don't penalize them if they don't fulfill a resolution. The resolution is not written in stone. It's a guide.

Good Luck and hope we can all celebrate in 2015 even the smallest accomplishment together!

However your family arrives at resolutions, the best part is that you're doing it together and learning how to manage your role not only in the family but also in the larger world.