

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple A Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Dr. Christine Cabrera. She is one of our primary care providers here at Lake Region Healthcare's Clinic Services and she's here to talk to us about New Year's resolutions and living healthier in 2019. Thanks for joining us, Dr. Cabrera.

Dr. Cabrera: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: At the turn of the new year, I think a lot of people have the tradition of setting a New Year resolution, and it's probably safe to say that the majority of those goals are either forgotten or given up on by the time February rolls around. But, we wanted to take some time today whether you are setting some personal goals or putting some big public goals out there to help you keep your word, to help you keep on track for 2019. Maybe making them lifestyle changes instead of short term resolutions. Before we start, Dr. Cabrera, tell us just a little bit about who you are and your practice here at Lake Region Healthcare for background.

Dr. Cabrera: Well, I'm originally from Fergus Falls and went to school at the University of Minnesota. Then, when we had kids, decided to come back and be where our family's at. Now I'm practicing in the primary care department as a family medicine physician here in Fergus Falls.

Katie Johnson: I really appreciate that you took the time to talk with us on this topic today. Before we start, do you have a resolution?

Dr. Cabrera: I do. I have decided this year that we're going to call them declarations.

Katie Johnson: Oh, I like that.

Dr. Cabrera: Like, "This is what I'm declaring I am going to do for this year," and am trying to make them achievable. You know, sometimes if you set a goal for losing 20 pounds, that's really maybe a little bit too much. But, if you set smaller goals then when you get them, I mean, it just kind of gives you a boost and it gets you on almost like, the snowball where you have motivation to keep going and keep going. My goal this year for being physically active is to do something every single day, and to try to do it with my boys too. I want it to be something that we can be active as a family and be a good role model for them for having that physical activity every day.

Katie Johnson: What a great declaration. I like it, and that's good inspiration. When we talk about trying something new, setting a new goal for ourselves, it can be a struggle. What would you say is good advice for things to lean on at times when you're feeling like, "I'm never going to make this anyway. I could just as well give up."

Dr. Cabrera: Studies have shown us that having a goal that motivates you, and some people even put a picture up, like, if it's being healthy for their grandkids or, "I want to stop smoking because I want to be around to see my kids graduate from college," or whatever it is. Having a picture and even putting that picture up where you see it regularly just helps to remind you why you're going through something that's a little tough. Sometimes those changes are really hard to make and we can make slip ups, but why we want to get back on track. Having a visual goal and making it something that's very meaningful for you is often helpful.

Then, accountability partners along the way too. Who's going to help you and who's going to support you? Not necessarily nag you, but be like, "Hey, how are you doing with this?" If you're getting off track, "What can I do to help you? Do you need a phone call in the morning to get up to go exercise or can I meet you at the gym?" Joining groups that are meant to do that are often very helpful, too.

Katie Johnson: Great tips. When we think about New Year's resolutions, some really common ones are to quit smoking, to lose weight, and to save money. I wanted to kind of talk about those three in particular and how to set yourself up for success with each one of these goals. Let's talk first about quitting smoking. What are some tips to help increase your chances of actually quitting this time?

Dr. Cabrera: Having a plan. A lot of people will set a quit date. Like, "By February 14th, by Valentine's Day I am going to be a nonsmoker." Then, work on decreasing how much tobacco they're using by that time. Then using things like medications or nicotine replacement so you don't have those cravings, and again, having a support system in place. Somebody that you're checking in with and like, "Okay, by this day I'm not going to be a smoker anymore."

Katie Johnson: That's nice. It's maybe a little bit easier than that cold turkey approach, too.

Dr. Cabrera: Yeah.

Katie Johnson: What about for the people that are wanting to reduce the number that they see on the scale as their goal? What kind of advice do you have for people whose goal is to lose weight?

Dr. Cabrera: Yeah, numbers aren't necessarily motivating unless you're achieving them. I think it has to be more than a number. What does it mean to you if you were to lose 10 pounds? Does it mean that you would look better in your clothes? Does it mean that you would move easier, that your knees would hurt less, that you'd be able to do more fun activities outside with your family? I think what that number actually means is the motivator. Trying to figure out what is going to be the thing that motivates you to make those changes.

Katie Johnson: We talk a lot about the full spectrum of wellness around here, all the components, and one of those is financial wellness. Saving money is a common resolution that people have. What are some solutions to keep your money saving related goals?

Dr. Cabrera: I think with that, also, it helps to have accountability partners as well. I mean, when we, let's say we get a bonus or a raise, what do you do with that extra money? It's so easy to just go out and spend it on yourself, and you think, "Hey, I deserve it." There's a little truth to that. If you've worked hard, you do deserve it. You also want to think about the future, too. General goals are putting, you know, a third for the future, a third to pay off debt, and a third for the present. The present would be like, things that you're wanting right now.

Another great group that I've been involved in before that's also good accountability and good information is Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University. A lot of, you can check online, and a lot of people have different groups going on in the community. That's a good way to, for 10 weeks, kind of put yourself on a budget and figure out what will help move you forward financially.

Katie Johnson: Right, right. Some people might find January to be kind of a depressing month, to be honest. I probably count myself among them. You know, the holidays are over, we have less sunlight, cold weather, seasonal depression, other mental wellness things can be an issue this time of year. What kinds of goals or action plans do you recommend for people at this time of year to kind of improve their mental health amidst all that kind of down stuff going on?

Dr. Cabrera: Yeah, well, if you can afford it and if you've done the financial goals, you can maybe make a trip down south and get a little bit of sunshine. Another thing would be possibly investing in a light box to just get some of that sunlight, that daylight that would be helpful to boost mood. Sometimes taking some extra vitamin D seems to boost mood a little bit too. Yeah, we all need it.

Katie Johnson: We do, we do. Those trips can be really motivational, something to look forward to, even if it's not necessarily to some place extremely exotic, just having something different to look forward to. That makes me think of our community health challenge and the trip we'll be giving away. We'll talk more about that at the end of this show. Logically, I think we can conclude that regular assessments or check ins towards our progress would be a best practice in order to keep resolutions. I'm wondering what you think about timelines for revisiting our goals. I mean, it's probably unrealistic to think we set a goal on January 1st and we don't really check in again until December 31st.

Dr. Cabrera: Right. The people who have the most success with changing a habit or changing a lifestyle are those who can keep it up for at least 30 days, more success if you keep it up for two months. Having regular check ins to see where you're at, and if you've had a few missteps, some plans in place for how do I get back on track.

If you can keep it up for two months, you're more likely to make it a lifestyle change. That's what, I think, that is the point of resolutions. We're not looking for a temporary fix. Everybody wants to figure out, "How do I get my life back on the road map to where I want to be with my health and wellness?"

Katie Johnson: When we talk about doing that, one of the acronyms that comes to mind is the SMART acronym for setting goals that kind of addresses that. Making it something that can be a lifestyle change. For listeners who haven't heard about what a SMART goal is, could you give us a little more info on that?

Dr. Cabrera: Sure. SMART is an acronym that stands for specific, motivating, attainable, relevant, and trackable. Specific, if you put a vague goal out there like, "I am just going to lose weight," that is often not very helpful. You really have to have a target to know how you're going to shoot for it. Specific could be, "I am going to lose five pounds in three months." Or, "I'm going to run a 5K by June." Then, once you have that specific goal, it's a little bit easier to figure out, "How am I going to get there from where I am now?"

Motivating, it's something that you need to be excited about or interested in accomplishing. If you say that, "I'm going to be an Olympic athlete," but you're really not that interested in it, then it'd be hard to accomplish that goal.

Katie Johnson: Not going to happen.

Dr. Cabrera: Yeah, and attainable, again, if you say, "I'm going to be an Olympic athlete," and yet you have never been off your couch, then that's probably not very attainable. Maybe just getting out and walking would be a good goal for you. Relevant, it needs to be meaningful for you in order to keep up with it. Trackable, you want to have some measures that you can look at week to week or month to month to know if you're on the pathway to getting to your goal.

Katie Johnson: You mentioned your kids earlier, too. I think of kids and their possible resolutions or ideas for what they might want to improve. Do you have any tips for including kids in the process of self improvement?

Dr. Cabrera: Yeah, you know, I think it's kind of fun if you are making resolutions for yourself, let your kids in on it. They often are very good at keeping us on task and letting us know when we're not doing the things that we say we're going to do. They can be great accountability partners.

Katie Johnson: Yes.

Dr. Cabrera: Then, it also teaches them how to set goals too. That is great for the rest of their life. I mean, we all have to set goals at some time, so teaching your kids how to set goals and how to attain them will help them later on, too.

Katie Johnson: Great life lessons, for sure. Anything else you'd like to share with our listeners as we head into 2019 and they're thinking about better health?

Dr. Cabrera: Well, I would say if you haven't started with having a physical or just some regular blood work, and you know that you need to make some changes, it's hard when it's vague and you just don't know what your cholesterol is at, so maybe coming in and getting a wellness visit or a screening and just seeing where you're at. If you're a smoker and you know that that's something that you want to stop but you just don't know how, coming in for a visit too and talking about the options that are available will be helpful too, to meet your goals.

Katie Johnson: Those preventive wellness checks are so often covered by insurance as well, and there's really no reason not to use that as part of the measurable, part of the good knowledge that you put to work towards improving your health. That's a great tip, and if our listeners don't have a New Year's resolution yet or if you're looking for a way to help you attain it, I really want to invite everyone to join our community health challenge. Registration is open now, just go to lrhc.org/wow, wheel of wellness.

We've got the wheel back. We've got some fun challenges. We're bringing back the tropical destination for our physical activity portion, and it's going to be a fun way as a community to work towards improving our health not just with physical activity, but with all the components of wellness. I also want to invite our listeners to the January 21st living well session. It's going to be more on resolutions and making them stick with our wellness coach Gary [Sitesma 00:12:31], and a personal testimonial from one of our patients, Sue [Honaman 00:12:35]. That's going to be a fun night as well. All the information on our website at lrhc.org. Dr. Cabrera, thanks for sharing some tips for us for helping us keep our resolutions and live a healthier 2019. Best of luck to you in your declaration to move in 2019 as well.

Dr. Cabrera: Thank you very much. I hope everybody has a great 2019.

Katie Johnson: Dr. Christine Cabrera, my guest today on Apple A Day. Dr. Cabrera and Katie Johnson reminding you there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.