The holidays can be an enjoyable time of year spent with friends and family, but they can also give rise to many high-pressure situations, such as tense family events, trying to find the perfect gifts, or struggling to keep healthy in spite of all the holiday parties you may be attending. Combine this with making a resolution of any kind, then add the pressure you can put upon yourself for change in the New Year, and you've got the potential for big-time stress!

Experts say that January is considered one of the most stressful months of the year, and the resolutions we make when the clock strikes midnight on January 1st certainly contribute to high stress levels. While resolutions to be healthier or give up negative habits can be beneficial, the expectations we set for ourselves are often unreasonable ("I will exercise every day for an hour"), and therefore unsustainable. As the month of January progresses and the whirl from the holidays slows down, motivation frequently wanes and challenges crop up.

If you are going to set New Years Resolutions, here are some ideas to make the process more realistic, as well as more enjoyable. Follow the tips below for a happier and healthier new year:

- **Take baby steps, then increase in difficulty as you become more accustomed to the changes.**
- **Build in rewards for your progress.**
- **Make sure to give yourself some wiggle-room for setbacks - they are part of the natural process of obtaining any goal.**

- **Think about broad changes, rather than specific behaviors. For example, instead of "I will practice yoga every morning," perhaps you could say, "I will develop better stress management practices."**
- **Think of what you would like to add to your life, rather than take away.**

If you'd like to learn how to better manage holiday stress and New Year's resolutions, call your EAP. We can help.

800-451-1834

MIIA Massachusetts based Member driven