

# FROM NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO FIGHTING FIT

MADE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO GET HEALTHIER IN 2015? HERE'S HOW TO ACTUALLY MAKE IT HAPPEN - FOR REAL. BY JUSTIN GREY.

Clichéd and oft-unfulfilled as they are, you can bet your left leg that moving into 2015 New Year's resolutions will be boldly committed to by many of us with wide-eyed optimism about bettering ourselves. The trick with all New Year's resolutions is keeping committed to your goals after all the hullabaloo of January has worn off.

If you've resolved to get healthier in 2015, the first thing to note is that healthier living is a two-part riddle. Getting in shape physically gets all the limelight with the new fad diets every other week and personal trainers and 24-hour, low-cost gyms on every corner.

But equally important - and perhaps even more so for time-poor, stressed out SME business owners - is managing your mental health. And make no mistake, mental health and physical health go hand in hand, and maintaining your general health and wellbeing requires working on both and neglecting neither.

Sydney-based corporate psychologist Stephanie Thomson argues that mental and physical health are intimately related. "Your nervous system cannot deliver consistently calm, positive moods for you if you are not taking care of its basic needs. It's just not possible. Take little islands of time out of your

day to exercise to keep everything working as it should, particularly if your business requires you to be quite sedentary."

## MAKE TIME TO INVEST IN YOURSELF

Personal trainer Aaron Smith is Founder and CEO of KX Group, which offers a range of alternative fitness classes in pilates, barre and yoga, as well as full-blown body and mind cleansing retreats overseas. While knowing first-hand the stresses involved in running your own business, Aaron believes investing in your health is important because by doing so you are also investing in your business.

"There's definitely a correlation between fitness and business success," he says. "To beat anxiety or depression, exercise is pretty much your answer. As soon as fitness is achieved, everything else seems to fall into place. And it's actually quite remarkable what you can achieve when you can fit that into your routine."

Aaron is sympathetic to the time constraints SME business owners are invariably under, and that finding - and indeed justifying - time to exercise isn't easy. But he stresses that you only need to participate in your chosen form of daily exercise for 30

minutes to reap the benefits.

"When you first get up, literally don't check your email or your social calendar," he advises. "Just go for a walk, go for a run, go to the gym, and it only needs to be half an hour. People think that they don't have time to exercise for an hour or an hour and a half in the morning. But as long as you're getting up and doing something, it just sets your mind on what you need to do for the day. You'll be more productive throughout the day and you'll sleep better at night as well."

"Also, when you exercise first thing in the morning, your choices of eating during the day become a lot more positive and you're keeping that diet on track. People that don't exercise in the morning and just go to work without breakfast, they get hungry and the first thing they grab is shit. Get up and exercise in the morning, then at night time, make sure you schedule half an hour to plan for what you're going to eat the next day."

## EASING THE MENTAL BURDEN

In her own psychology practice, Insight Matters, Stephanie Thomson counsels a number of SME business owners, who she says tend to be, "...very proactive about





getting on top of things and trying to do the best job they can from all kinds of angles." To manage the mental stress that goes hand and hand with operating under prolonged pressure, Stephanie advises business owners to take quality time outside of their business.

"The mind is designed to be in the 'on' setting for a period, and then in the 'off' setting for a period, so if you try and operate it contra to the design specs, you're going to be in trouble," she explains. "There's really no way around that. You will not be able to serve the business, or those working for you, or those you're working for, if you do not keep yourself in reasonable mental functioning order as a priority."

Stephanie has seen cases where business owners who started their business from scratch struggle to delegate and step away from the business in order to recharge mentally. She suggests that by factoring

compulsory breaks into your working week, your business and employees will inevitably accommodate around that. But it's taking that first step to step away and recharge.

"For the people who started the business, the originators and the owners, it can be very tempting to continue almost indefinitely with that belief that the business can't fly at all without them. And that's not true...or it shouldn't be true."

### ON YOUR MARKS...

If you're aiming for a healthier 2015, Aaron advises to make a legitimate plan rather than just act reflexively. "Don't join a gym straight away. Map out your goals - what are the main goals you want to achieve? How are you going to get there? As a business owner, you should be good at putting goals in place. A big thing is keeping motivated. Most people

are really motivated to start, then they're demotivated a week later. Print out a calendar, stick it on your wall and cross off the days where you've trained. 20 minutes is better than nothing - you might not burn as many calories, but it'll keep your mind motivated."

And in terms of mental health, corporate psychologist and business coach Paul Mitchell advises to accommodate renewal and recovery into your schedule.

"See your life and your business as a series of sprints - go hard, and renew and recover. Go hard, and renew and recover. Make sure that you absolutely put time aside for renewal. That's the problem - everyone's going hard, but no one gives enough recognition and appreciation for the importance of renewal in relation to performance. You have to take control of your renewal."