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Another year on our doorstep – Resolutions anyone?

There is no better time than the new year to start working on new goals. If you are looking for some inspiration for your list of resolutions, the following article could serve as a useful guide. Below, you will find ideas that will help you improve your health and your impact on the environment along with some tips on how to stay accountable to ensure you accomplish your goals.

Goal: To be informed about the products you purchase and their impact on your health.

The first step in the right direction involves educating yourself about the products you expose yourself to in your daily life. As an idea, consider their effects on your health and the environment. There are many great resources that you can consult but beware of what is advertised to you. Some products may be advertised as being “eco-friendly” or “green”, but upon reading the ingredients list, you may find that to be untrue. To facilitate your understanding of product quality and safety, look for certified logos such as “Ecocert” and “Ecologo” (ASEQ, Newsletter, July 2020).

Reading the labels of all the products you own may sound exhausting, so break the job down into smaller tasks. For instance, you may want to start by looking at a lotion that you use regularly and try to find an alternative for it, if needed. Set

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concrete goals such as “Evaluate 5 products a month”, and as you get comfortable, increase your efforts. Keep a journal to stay accountable!

Another way to become an informed and conscious consumer consists of familiarizing yourself with local brands that sell safe products. Luckily, an easy Google search will present you with many suggestions for brands in your area. Remember that whenever you support a local brand that sells safe products, you are making a choice that is good for your health, the environment, and your local economy.

Lastly, you might have specific priorities that will require their own specific goals. For example, if you are concerned with the safety of your kitchen, you may want to inspect all kitchen-related things including cookware, air freshness, and cleaning products. The table below summarizes a few goals along with examples of specific goals that you can set at your desired pace.

Concern	Main/Abstract Goal	Examples of Concrete Goals
<i>Kitchen</i>	To ensure that products in the kitchen are safe for your health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Substitute plastic containers with glass containers. ✓ Use a cloth towel instead of paper towels. ✓ Make your own cleaning products out of natural ingredients.
<i>Beauty and Skin Care</i>	To limit products that are harmful to health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stop buying products containing parabens. ✓ Invest in products from local, eco-friendly, and vegan brands.
<i>Children's Health</i>	To ensure products are safe for children's health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Replace plastic toys with wooden toys. ✓ Eliminate products containing fragrances.

Goal: To be informed about current environmental issues.

Learning about current environmental issues can help you understand what steps you need to take to reduce pollution that you might be causing. As well, caring for the environment also means caring for yourself. For example, by reducing your use of aerosol products containing volatile organic compounds (VOCs), you are not

only helping diminishing air pollution, but you are also preventing the negative health effects that VOCs could potentially cause (Gerster et al., 2014).

Most of the time, you will find that what you need to do is as simple as using a reusable canvas bag instead of a plastic bag. You may also want to get friends and family members involved to create a larger impact. Check out the following table for examples of goals that you can set to care for the planet.

Concern	Abstract Goal	Examples of Concrete Goals
Air Pollution	To improve indoor and outdoor air quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Avoid buying aerosol products containing VOCs. ✓ Carpool whenever possible.
Water Pollution	To prevent the destruction of aquatic habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eliminate the use of surfactants (Jackson et al., 2015). ✓ Stop buying sunscreen containing oxybenzone that is harmful to coral reef amongst other aquatic species (Schneider & Lim, 2019).

Keep in mind that these goals are flexible, and you can get creative with them. For more ideas and information, you can visit ecolivingguide.ca. If you are interested in staying knowledgeable, subscribe to the EHAQ newsletter at aseq-ehaq.ca/en/news/newsletter. These newsletters succinctly summarize information on various topics and inform readers of actions they can take to achieve specific goals.

Quick Tips on Staying on Track

1. Keep a journal in which you will handwrite your goals.
2. Break large goals into smaller, measurable goals as demonstrated in the tables above.
3. Revisit your goals on a weekly or monthly basis to see how you are doing.
4. If you have trouble accomplishing your goals, set easier goals. If your goals seem too simple, create new goals and increase your efforts.
5. Get friends and family on board to keep each other motivated and to increase your overall positive impact.



References

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