The new year is upon us and with that comes New Year's resolutions. Last year, we talked about financial resolutions. This year, let's make the focus on healthy resolutions. As you know, health is one of those things that can push a budget into the red in a minute. In fact, the two major causes of bankruptcies are loss of job and medical expenses.

Let's promote a healthy lifestyle during the next year. Rather than talking about the usual start lifting weights and losing 100 pounds resolutions, think about focusing on setting goals that promote good health.

This year resolve to take better care of yourself. When you adopt positive mental and physical health practices, it improves your health, but more than that, it can improve your relationships with those around you.

Sometimes we are so busy that we overlook the impact our long to-do lists have on us. Stress results when we have more to do than we can possibly accomplish. Our best intentions to work out sometimes fall by the wayside when the time crunch comes.

Here are some habits that don't require extra time yet move you toward taking better care of yourself while building relationships with others.

- Develop the habit of optimism. Individuals who are optimistic believe that when a bad event happens to them, it probably won't happen again and it has nothing to do with other areas of their lives, making them more resistant to depression. Optimism can be learned. Develop the habit of optimism by beginning and ending each day with a positive statement.
- Be flexible. Look for alternative ways of thinking about stressful situations. Be open to new experiences.
- Have realistic expectations. Know what you can control and don't spend time worrying about what you cannot control.
- Discontinue the use of words such as "should have," "if only," and "someday." Enjoy the moment rather than feeling guilty about the past or worrying about the future.
• Schedule time for fun with people who are important to you. Don't leave those enjoyable shared moments to chance. Plan for them.
• Develop healthy sleep habits. Relax with techniques such as imagery, reading a book, or meditating. When it is difficult to go to sleep, it's helpful to get up and do something else to relax. Then, when you are sleepy, go back to bed.
• Exercise with friends or family. This combination pays off in two ways. You can build a supportive relationship and also gain the physical benefits of exercise.

Taking care of yourself doesn't require time away from other important tasks nor does it require time away from significant people in your life.

Taking care of yourself does involve making choices that contribute to positive well-being so that you have the capacity to care for others.

Roxie Rodgers Dinstel is a professor of extension on the Tanana District Extension Faculty. Questions or column requests can be e-mailed to her at rrdinstel@alaska.edu or by calling 907-474-2426. The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.