

Rose Consulting Group, Inc.

Client Newsletter

March 2005

Robert G. Rose & Robyn W. Porterfield

Your mind and body form a complex interaction, with your conscious mind playing only a part in your actions.

Understanding that complexity will help you understand why change is difficult—and why change is possible.

KEEPING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS—FIRST.....THE BAD NEWS

If you made New Year's resolutions three months ago chances are you didn't keep them. Most people don't.

And why not? What could be simpler? You are in charge of you, you have this marvelous data processing and communication device called the brain and with some simple programming you set up some behavior protocols, send some messages to the body and that's that.

Of course it is not that simple. If it were we would all look like movie stars, behave like saints, manage our finances like bankers, and have no family conflict. And given that it's not that simple – what is the process behind our decisions and behavior?

YOUR MIND OPERATES BY COMMITTEE — AND YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY MEMBER

In fact, you are not even the chairperson in many cases. It's hard to believe but true, "you" are composed of a lot more entities than the conscious rational person you think of as "you."

For example, there is that member we like to call "Greedy" for obvious reasons: Greedy wants pleasure, immediately, and has no thought for any consequences short of immediate and excruciating pain.

You know Greedy. Greedy is the one who had that cheesecake with chocolate sauce after you had sworn that this time you would keep the diet. There was a vote and you lost.

But Greedy is also a good example of a double problem. Not only is Greedy a problem—he/she is a necessity! If Greedy

gets quashed for some reason it is called *anhedonia* and without getting into the details, *anhedonia* is the express lane to severe depression. You must be able to enjoy basic pleasures. Now, let's meet "Grumpy."

Grumpy goes by many names. Grumpy is a profound combination of mind and body so close as to have blurred boundaries. Grumpy is opinionated to the point of listening to no one—least of all you.

Grumpy's opinions are experience-based, period and that experience extends back for *thousands of centuries!* A century here and there means nothing. Grumpy harkens to the fact that for 100,000 years the people who were paranoid, short-sighted, quick-tempered, self-serving and inclined to gorge themselves on fat meat lived long, prospered and had many offspring. (That is true in much of the world today however unattractive you may find the notion).

Grumpy hates to get cut off in traffic and will pump you full of adrenaline so that you may pursue the transgressor (who targeted you, specifically), confront him, flee in terror if he is larger and attack him if he is smaller. Of course, you overrule Grumpy—but he doesn't like it.

Grumpy, Greedy and other unattractive sorts are part of the permanent committee that governs you. You may miss a meeting, but they never do. And that's why you find yourself shaking your head from time to time saying "why did I do that?"

AND THEN THERE IS THE BRAIN....

No doubt about it, the brain is one marvelous computer. But it also has some problematic operating issues—most of which are hard-wired. Unfortunately, you can't upgrade to a better platform.

For example, new programs are always subordinate to old programs however more efficient the new programs may be. You've heard "old habits die hard"? Absolutely true, and they are hard-wired this way!

Have you noticed that you sometime conveniently forget things? The brain wants to keep programs from conflicting and crashing, so there is a handy program in all of us called "rationalization". Rationalization reconciles painful conflicts in thinking, even if it takes some absurd logic to do so. And no matter how true something is if it is painful the brain often refuses to write to hard drive. Sorry.

BUT NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS ARE HARD TO KEEP!

Any behavioral or physical change is hard to make and harder to maintain. Once into your new plan you find that it isn't fun, old habits resurface, you forget what led you to even want to change a perfectly wonderful you, and in any case you aren't seeing any payoff—at least not this week. And oh my! That chocolate cheesecake really does taste good and it is only for this one time.

BUT YOU CAN KEEP YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS!

People do lose weight, develop skills, and repair damaged relations – proving it can be done.

Go back and look at those resolutions. Are they in any way fun? You cannot rob yourself of basic pleasures without replacing one pleasure with another. If you hate to jog find another exercise you do like, or find someone you like to do it with.

Does your diet make long-term sense? Your body is no fool. If you crash diet, your body will regain that weight at the first opportunity – for eons sudden weight loss was precursor to death so naturally our body does not like that and will fight it.

As executive coaches RCG helps executives keep their resolutions and make positive changes. We tell them to always make a plan, but not to fear regression of behavior in four to six months—this regression is inevitable and hard-wired. If you anticipate it you can "get back on the wagon" without derailing the process.

Other tips: Monitor your success on a regular but not daily basis. Daily monitoring doesn't allow enough for random fluctuation and static; quarterly monitoring means too much time between progress checks.

Keep a written list of what you proposed in the way of goals and what success you are having. Making small-step goals is key. If you want to become more comfortable with public speaking, don't have your first goal be to be the key speaker at your favorite association's national yearly meeting. A good goal would be to give a few department-wide presentations on topics you find interesting first. Seek feedback from others to keep yourself honest

In short – get the committee behind you if you want to succeed!

The authors can be reached at:

Robyn W. Porterfield, PhD
porterfield@roseconsultinggroup.com

Robert G. Rose, PhD
rose@roseconsultinggroup.com

Visit our website at:
www.roseconsultinggroup.com

