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Setting goals to make a difference in one's life

BY ANDY NYSTROM

anystrom@bothell-reporter.com

There comes a time when even Dr. Brett Daniel must heed his own advice.

The 36-year-old family medicine physician at Bothell's Pacific Medical Center often consults with his patients about eating healthy, losing weight and grasping onto a positive attitude.

Now, it's Daniel's moment in the spotlight, he says with a laugh.

"I'm going on vacation (to Hawaii) in February and I have to get back in a swimsuit with my wife," he said with a smile in his Canyon Park office last Friday afternoon. "The two of us have agreed not to have sweets until we go — break the habit of having something sweet every day, like chocolate here and a cookie there.

"I try and I fail just like everybody else. I fall off the wagon and get back on a lot."

Daniel is set to succeed, he's sure of it, but like the advice the doctor offers his patients, he wants to do it the right way. When people start exercising, eating healthier and drinking more water, their whole lifestyle changes and they gain

confidence, as well, he said.

"I'm a role model for some of these patients and I have to walk the walk and talk the talk or I'm kind of a hypocrite," Daniel said. "I'm often inspired by my patients, for sure. I say, 'Tell me how you did it,' and I'll share their story with other patients."

But first, there must be hard work and success before celebration.

One of the things he notices is that people make their goals too broad: I want to lose weight, I want to be rich, I want to eat healthier, for example. Daniel says those goals aren't focused and people need to put together an "action plan" in order to build up to the grand change they're hoping for.

In losing weight, do they want to eat differently, exercise more or combine the two? Daniel feels walking at a specific time during the week will work, and taking longer strolls on the weekend is a bonus.

"Keep track on a chart, have your wife check it, and 'If I don't do it, then I have to make dinner Sunday night,'" he said.

A crucial way for men to achieve their goals is by

competing with their buddies for the top spot in the weight-loss game. For example, while keeping track of their Weight Watchers results, "If (they're) in it with other people, it seems to be more of a supportive environment — competition is kind of their social support," Daniel said.

On the women's side, a walking group or an exercise group will provide the social atmosphere needed to talk to each other about how they're doing and the things that they're struggling with, he added.

Breaking out of people's previous schedule is the hardest step, but once the goals are set and the change begins to show little by little, people get excited about what they're doing and how far they can make it, Daniel said.

"When you prove you have the willpower to overcome something you didn't think you could do, that builds confidence so you do other changes you weren't sure about," said Daniel, noting that can apply to everything in one's life. "As you start to be healthier, you start to feel healthier and that kind of snowballs into other things."



Dr. Brett Daniel chats with pediatrician Akiko Hall about an upcoming staff meeting in the Pacific Medical Center lunchroom in Bothell last Friday. ANDY NYSTROM, *Bothell-Kenmore Reporter*