

Theme this Issue: Heart Health

January/February 2010

## Keeping your heart healthy New Year's resolutions when under pressure

by guest writer Amber Toutant

**P**icture this: you've been active and eating healthy and your best friend says: "Come on, order some dessert, you've been so good at sticking to your resolution." Comments like these can start unravelling your best intentions. Says psychologist Dr. Michael Vallis: "When someone else feels bad about their own unhealthy habits, their first thought might be to keep you on that same unhealthy path. How you manage that pressure is a big component of success."

Lifestyle changes can happen any time of year, but New Year's has a special appeal. "Not only is it a blank calendar – a chance for a fresh start – it also arrives after a month filled with overeating, smoking, drinking and spending more time on shopping than on being active. And this makes people feel bad. And guess what? Feeling bad is a very powerful motivator for change." He says this is the reason why most people end up falling into bad habits soon after. "When you base your desire to change on the fact that you feel bad, as soon as you start to feel better, you lose that motivation." And, he says, that makes it easier to succumb when friends start offering excuses to cheat.

What can you do? Well, before you start out on your goal, Dr. Vallis recommends that you ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I want to change?
2. Why? What is my personal reason?

3. Am I willing to commit to this for at least a year?
4. How hard am I willing to work right now if I may not see the benefits for a while?

Resolutions take a lot of commitment and work. While behavioural research shows that it takes only 21 days for some things to become a habit, Dr. Vallis says real lifestyle changes can take a lot longer – especially since it helps to make it through at least one year of dealing with all the pressure of different events and holidays to get the confidence to make it through a second time around.

So, what can give you that lasting motivation? Dr. Vallis says it's important to come up with personal, meaningful reasons to stick to the change. "For instance, if your goal is to get active and eat better so you can lose weight, what you have to

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## Living with MS

### Maintaining a healthy relationship through good times and hard times

**M**aggie Corcoran recalls sitting in a bar with a co-worker in the spring of 1966. She spotted a handsome man sitting across the way. The man winked at her, and she winked back.

In the spring of 1968, the pair eloped at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church in Toronto with just two witnesses. Afterward, they went to Sutton Place Hotel to inform their loved ones they were married.

“In those days you didn’t have cell phones. So we sat in the restaurant and had a phone brought to the table.”

In addition to becoming Terry’s wife, Maggie became step-mother to his young son. They went on to have two more children.

Eighteen years after the wedding, Maggie started to feel an electric shock sensation down her spine, as well as a tightening sensation around her abdomen. She also noticed her hands were numb while folding laundry. She was checked for a brain tumor, a virus, and was also told she may have multiple sclerosis.

She had a second attack four years later. It was 1990 and she was able to have an MRI – unlike during her first attack because the technology was not yet available – which showed MS.

Shortly after her diagnosis, she began a clinical trial for an MS drug in London, which required her to travel from Toronto each week. Terry went with her to every appointment. “He always said, “Two sets of ears are better than one,” she says. The couple still go to Maggie’s neurology appointments together.

Maggie and Terry coped with her diagnosis by becoming educated about the disease. They got reading material from the MS Society and attended the Toronto Chapter’s

MS 101 session, and spoke with professionals, such as the neurological nurse that was working with Maggie during the clinical trial. Keeping a sense of humour is one of the primary ways Terry supports Maggie in his role of caregiver. She recalls a time when she was going through three MS attacks over the course of four months, and during that time, her son was the victim of a stabbing. She had sunk into a depression, but she says Terry could still make her laugh, even at that difficult time.

And supporting Terry is also important, Maggie says. She says she recognizes that caring for her is hard work, especially now that her MS has become secondary progressive. The couple have had to make changes such as installing a ceiling lift, which has relieved Terry from having to lift her up to 25 times day.

Their relationship is healthy, Maggie says, because they talk a lot. Also, they enjoy going out as well entertaining friends at their home. She says they approach their dinner parties like they approach everything else, by talking it over and planning everything out from the menu to when they will set the table.

And just as it is important to spend time together, Maggie says it’s also important to respect each other’s privacy and spend some time apart. Recently, she switched from a manual to a power wheelchair, which has given her more independence. “I have been going places I haven’t gone in 15 years,” she says. ♦

Do you have a story you would like to share? Contact Julie at 416-967-3046 or [julie.crljen@mssociety.ca](mailto:julie.crljen@mssociety.ca).

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## Chapter Events

### The Toronto Chapter presents...

## AGM 2010

*As the MS Society of Canada is changing its fiscal year to match the calendar year, instead of running September to August, we will be having an Annual General Meeting for the fiscal year 2009A (September 2009 to December 2009).*

March 2010 – *exact date TBA*  
Cummer Ave./Willowdale Ave.  
Light refreshments

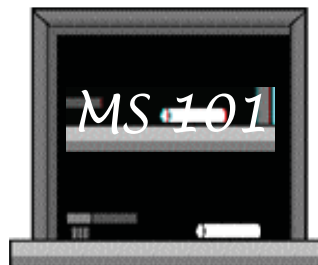
Please watch for your invitation in the mail this winter.

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Coming this spring...

## MS 101

MS 101 is a seminar for those diagnosed with MS within the past three years. It will be held in April. More information to come soon.



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## What would you like to hear about?


Tell us which topics are relevant to you. We will be planning our education sessions for 2010 and need your input to ensure that the topics we choose will be of value to our members.


Submit your ideas to [torontoevents@mssociety.ca](mailto:torontoevents@mssociety.ca) or 416-967-3035.

## Event Registration

If you would like to register for a Toronto Chapter event, please contact the chapter by using the following telephone number or e-mail address, or by using our online form:

 **Telephone**  
416-967-3035

 **E-mail**  
[torontoevents@mssociety.ca](mailto:torontoevents@mssociety.ca)

 **Online**  
[www.mssociety.ca/toronto](http://www.mssociety.ca/toronto)  
(Click on “Events”)

## Support Groups

The Toronto Chapter is affiliated with several support groups meeting in different areas of the city.

To find the group that best fits your interest, location and schedule, please contact one of the following staff members:  
Lynn, 416-967-3032  
Angela, 416-967-3034

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## Special Section

### Announcing Children's Leisure Activity Subsidy



2010 marks the start of a new decade, and what better way to commemorate this new beginning than with the start of an exciting new two-year program.

As the result of a generous funding grant from the Paloma Foundation, the Toronto Chapter is pleased

to offer a Children's Leisure Activity Subsidy. This subsidy is available to children and teenagers up to 18 years of age who have a parent with multiple sclerosis who live within the Toronto Chapter's geographic boundaries.

Funding will be available to a maximum of \$300 per child to help support extra curricular activities for children who have a parent with MS. Such activities could include purchase of sports equipment, membership fees/uniform costs for clubs such as Brownies or fees for music or dance lessons.

Applications will be made available by January 15, 2010, and applications will be accepted from February 1, 2010, to December 1, 2010. Applications and information about the program can be obtained online at [www.mssociety.ca/toronto](http://www.mssociety.ca/toronto) or by contacting Lynn Laccohee at 416-967-3032 or [lynn.laccohee@mssociety.ca](mailto:lynn.laccohee@mssociety.ca). ♦

### Commemorative Giving

The gift that helps to maximize the quality of life for people with MS

**Birthdays • Anniversaries •  
Memoriams • Bar mitzvahs and  
bat mitzvahs • Wedding favours**

Contact Patricia Cole at 416-967-3036  
or [patricia.cole@mssociety.ca](mailto:patricia.cole@mssociety.ca), or visit  
[www.mssociety.ca/toronto/help.htm](http://www.mssociety.ca/toronto/help.htm)

### Want to Go Green?

If you want to receive all Toronto Chapter newsletters and flyers by e-mail instead of mail, please contact Julie at [julie.crljen@mssociety.ca](mailto:julie.crljen@mssociety.ca).

## Chapter Update

### Best wishes Lisa and congratulations Nancy



Baby Olivia

**L**isa Landriault is leaving the Toronto Chapter. She and her husband Dan have adopted a second child, five-month-old Olivia Lee, and Lisa has decided to stay home to spend time with her new daughter and 22-month-old son Xavier.

Nancy Torrance, who has been filling the manager, funding programs position for the past nine months, has now joined the chapter as a full-time staff member.

Some of Lisa's achievements include strengthening and expanding the chapter's funding programs, cementing strong relationships with vendors and clients and introducing the quarterly payment plan. We thank Lisa for her more than five years of dedication to the chapter.

Nancy had previously worked for the Toronto Chapter from 1995 to 2001. Nancy re-joined the MS Society of Canada in 2006, working in Ontario Division as a coordinator, equipment program before joining the Toronto Chapter in 2009.

Please join us in congratulating Nancy and wishing the best to Lisa and her family. ♦



Thank you to  
**A Budget**  
for helping the  
Toronto Chapter  
provide air  
conditioners to  
members for more  
than 15 years

For your heating &  
cooling needs, call  
**416-703-0571**



## Resources

### Heart and Stroke Foundation

Toronto Office  
2300 Yonge St., Suite 1300  
Toronto  
416-489-7111  
[www.heartandstroke.on.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca)

### The Anne Johnston Health Station

2398 Yonge St. (Northwest Corner  
of Yonge and Montgomery)  
Toronto  
416-486-8666  
[www.ajhs.ca](http://www.ajhs.ca)

### Bridgepoint Health

14 St. Matthews Rd.  
Toronto  
416-461-8252  
[info@bridgepointhealth.ca](mailto:info@bridgepointhealth.ca)  
[www.bridgepointhealth.ca](http://www.bridgepointhealth.ca)

### Toronto Heart Health Partnership

Web information  
[www.intohealth.ca](http://www.intohealth.ca)  
[www.getintoit.ca](http://www.getintoit.ca)

### Variety Village

Fitness centre  
3701 Danforth Ave.  
Scarborough  
416-367-2828  
[www.varietyontario.ca](http://www.varietyontario.ca)

### Toronto Public Health

416-338-7600  
[publichealth@toronto.ca](mailto:publichealth@toronto.ca)  
[www.toronto.ca/health](http://www.toronto.ca/health)

## Donations

### Oct 16-09 to Dec 15-09

Memberships

\$1,145

Donations, General

\$12,062

Commemorative Giving

\$8,380

Gifts in Kind

\$43,795

United Way Toronto,

Donor's Choice

\$23,787

### Thank you donors!

Your contributions help provide services to individuals and families including educational, social and financial programs.

### A reminder

If you would like to donate to Toronto Chapter programs & services, please make your cheque payable to:

*Toronto Chapter, MS Society*

and address it to the attention of Patricia Cole.

### Special Event

## Chapter members enjoy 2009 Holiday Party



Attendees sit down to a three course holiday meal



Singing trio, the Sparklettes, provide entertainment after lunch

The meal was fresh and the mood was joyful at the Toronto Chapter's annual Holiday Party on December 10, held at the CNIB.

The chapter is grateful to the CNIB's catering staff, who once again prepared a wonderful holiday feast. Partygoers enjoyed three courses consisting of salad, a turkey dinner entree with all the fixings and a dessert.

Following the lunch, the Sparklettes took to the stage performed a variety of holiday and other classics to get the crowd moving. One of the party's highlights was when an impromptu dance floor started during the Sparklette's rendition of "Dancing Queen" by ABBA.

The event was a great way to finish off an amazing year here at the Toronto Chapter. We wish everyone a happy 2010! ♦

**Please note...**the Toronto Chapter comment line is changing to a direct dial number effective January 15. You can call **416-967-3035** to register for events or to make a comment or suggestion. The number 416-922-6600 ext. 2501 will no longer be in service.



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Toronto, Ontario, M3B 2T5  
Phone: 416.444.4470  
www.abilityhealthcare.ca  
info@abilityhealthcare.ca

A round of applause for...

Toronto Chapter  
volunteers!

Call Julie at  
416-967-3046  
to inquire



◀ *Story continued from Page 1*

## **..take your resolutions to heart**

ask yourself is ‘why am I going to want to keep doing it once my pants fit again?’ The answer may be that you are 48, and a father of a 10-year-old daughter and want to be healthy enough to walk her down the aisle at her wedding”

With shows like *The Biggest Loser*, it’s clear that making big changes fast is a recipe for good TV programming, but Dr. Vallis says, it’s not the best recipe for changes in real life.

“Try making small, sustainable changes. Let’s say, your goal is to eat healthier, so you’ve stopped eating after 9 p.m. and have switched to 2% milk from 18% cream. Imagine your next step is no more challenging than that. It might be trading white bread for whole-grain or switching from butter to soft, non-hydrogenated margarine.”

How will you deal with your spouse or co-worker who might say: “You’ve been so good. Skip the gym and come to a movie,” “Have just a little bit of cake – you’re skinny!” or “One smoke won’t hurt. You look so stressed.” Try being a broken record. Say no over and over – politely but firmly. “We tend to explain ourselves when people put pressure on us. Rather than explaining yourself – which is like asking permission – say in the fewest words, ‘Thank you – I don’t want to do that tonight.’ Just keep saying the same phrase over and over.”

Another method – called fogging – may help if people start asking you probing questions or making personal accusations – such as “Haven’t you heard that fad diets are bad for you?” or “You’re not as fun to go out with anymore.” Say something to let them know you are listening and it appears that you agree, and then continue with the broken record approach such as: “Yes, I’ve heard that before. But thank you, I’m still not interested.”

You don’t have to be perfect. If you stray from your resolution, don’t wait until next year to try again. “There’s nothing wrong with a person who starts a healthy lifestyle change and then stops for a while. This behaviour is actually normal. The only way you can fail is if you give up entirely and that won’t happen if you keep going back to your healthy habits as soon as you can.”♦

*Amber Toutant is a staff writer for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Reprinted with permission by the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Please visit [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) for more information about preventing and living with heart disease.*

## **Programs and Services**

### **Education, Information & Referral**

- Bimonthly newsletter, literature, resource room and website
- Education workshops and specialized courses including MS 101

### **Equipment Loans & Equipment Funding**

### **Subsidies for Home Help & Incontinence Supplies**

### **Supportive Counselling & Support Groups**

### **Recreation Programs**

### **Volunteer Services**

### **Social Action & Advocacy**

## Ask Angela

### Find fitness classes that are right for you

by Angela Rodriguez

Dear Angela,

I really want to get more involved in fitness this year, but I find regular exercise classes too challenging. Where can I find modified classes that would be more suitable for me?

Signed,

Want to Get Active



Dear W.T.G.A.,

This is a great question for a new year. Resolutions to get fit can be hard to keep, but it's great to hear that you want to give it a try. The chapter can refer you to many classes in Toronto that are adapted for persons with disabilities.

Our listing includes tai chi, yoga, pilates, gentle fitness and swimming. You can call me at 416-967-3034 to receive a copy by mail or visit the Toronto Chapter website at [www.mssociety.ca/toronto/recreation\\_table.htm](http://www.mssociety.ca/toronto/recreation_table.htm).

The City of Toronto Fun Guide, which is a listing of city-run recreation programs, has been updated to include a specialized guide for persons with disabilities. You can look at the guide online at [www.toronto.ca/parks](http://www.toronto.ca/parks) or give them a call at 416-394-8532 or 416-394-8535.

Enjoy your new activity. ♦

Contact Angela by e-mail at [angela.rodriquez@mssociety.ca](mailto:angela.rodriquez@mssociety.ca) or by telephone at 416-967-3034.

## Special Report

### Valentine's Day trivia

- ☞ Men in Ancient Rome began the tradition of writing Valentine's notes to women.
- ☞ The earliest surviving Valentine card was written by Charles, the Duke of Orleans around 1415.
- ☞ Valentine's Day is the second-largest card sending occasion, after Christmas.
- ☞ In the legend of St. Valentine, he was jailed for marrying young couples against the wishes of Emperor Claudius II, who believed unmarried men made better soldiers.



## MS Toronto

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Lynn Laccohee  
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#### MS Society of Canada Mission

To be a leader in finding a cure for multiple sclerosis and enabling people affected with MS to enhance their quality of life.

#### Toronto Chapter Vision

To maximize the quality of life for persons with MS and their support network living in Toronto Chapter's geographic boundaries.

The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of MS Toronto and of the MS Society of Canada. Articles on products and services are intended for information only and are not meant to be seen as endorsements.



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