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**CONTACT: David White, CAE- Executive Director**  
**(512) 788-0207**  
[tpa\\_dwhite@att.net](mailto:tpa_dwhite@att.net)

## **Making and Keeping your New Year's Resolutions**

### *Is a Lack of Willpower Holding You Back?*

**Charleston, SC, January 13, 2014** — Every year, many people promise to make lifestyle changes in the form of New Year's resolutions. Some of the most common resolutions include exercising, eating better and reducing the consumption of tobacco, alcohol or caffeine. Making these lifestyle changes can be great for your health, but a lack of willpower could stand in your way.

According to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Stress in America™ survey, lack of willpower is the number one reason for not following through with lifestyle changes. The good news is willpower can be strengthened. Like muscles are strengthened by regular exercise, regularly exerting self-control may improve willpower strength.

“Setting small, attainable goals throughout the year, instead of a singular, overwhelming goal on January 1<sup>st</sup> can better help you reach whatever it is you strive for,” Dr. Jeannine Monnier, South Carolina Psychological Association (SCPA) President said. “Remember, it is not the extent of the change that matters, but rather the act of recognizing that lifestyle change is important and working toward it, one step at a time.”

As we are two weeks into 2014, let's look at a few ways to strengthen willpower and make resolutions and lifestyle changes a reality.

#### **APA and SCPA offer these tips for making your New Year's resolution stick:**

**Start small** — Make resolutions that you think are easy to keep. If, for example, your aim is to exercise more frequently, schedule three or four days a week at the gym instead of seven. If you would like to eat healthier, try replacing dessert with something else you enjoy, like fruit or yogurt, instead of overhauling your entire diet.

**Change one behavior at a time** — Unhealthy behaviors develop over the course of time. Focus on changing one unhealthy habit at a time instead of overwhelming yourself by trying to break all your unhealthy behaviors at once.

**Talk about it** — Having someone to share your struggles and successes with makes your journey to a healthier lifestyle that much easier and less intimidating. Consider partnering with others to reach common goals, such as a workout class at your gym or a group of coworkers quitting smoking.

**Don't beat yourself up** — Perfection is unattainable. Remember that minor missteps when reaching your goals are completely normal and okay. Don't give up completely because you ate a brownie, or skipped the gym for a week. Everyone has ups and downs; resolve to recover from your mistakes and get back on track.

**Ask for support** — Accepting help from those who care about you and will listen can help strengthen your resilience and ability to achieve your New Year's resolution. If you feel overwhelmed or unable to meet your goals on your own, consider seeking professional help. Psychologists are trained to help with behavioral and lifestyle changes. They can help address triggers that prompt you to make unhealthy choices, identify positive ways to change unhealthy habits, and develop new skills and ways of thinking.

To learn more about willpower and mind/body health, visit [www.apa.org/helpcenter](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter) and follow us on Twitter at @APAHelpCenter. To find out more about the South Carolina Psychological Association, visit [www.scp psychology.com](http://www.scp psychology.com) and follow us on Twitter at @SCPpsychological.

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*South Carolina Psychological Association is the only professional organization in South Carolina representing all areas of psychology: academic, practitioner, public service, and students. As a 501 (c)(6) professional association that represents the professionals of psychology in South Carolina, South Carolina Psychological Association has the purpose to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting human welfare; to foster and maintain high standards of practice, teaching, and research in the field of psychology; and to make available to the public information regarding psychology as a science and as a profession.*

*The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes more than 134,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.*