



AGING TODAY

## Summer Daylight to Spark Change



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

**As temperatures soar and the daylight greets me** earlier every morning, I am overcome with a sense of optimism. The presence of hearty desert flora growing towards the light is my affirmation that longer days hold great promise for those willing to embrace this gift. I know logically, it's the same 24 hour day, it just feels like it's possible to get more done.

Just maybe it's hard to stick to those New Year's resolutions because the days seem shorter. Join me in a new movement for summer solstice resolutions. Do you need to institute a few good rituals or break some habits? Now is the perfect time.

We can thank our primitive brain for keeping us stuck in a rut. This served us well when we were roaming the savannah in an effort to survive. The survival instinct favors those who can recognize pattern and make quick decisions that result in self interest. With our default of our brain circuitry consisting of fear, self doubt, and an overriding force to maintain the status quo, it's a wonder we can leave the house everyday!

Hyperbole aside, the very real deeply subconscious chatter that takes place when we decide to institute a change may look like taking a foul shot in basketball. Imagine the opposing players and thousands of spectator's trash talking your proclamations of intentions. "I wouldn't go there, don't worry he never follows through, he'll quit after a week". The average person has about 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts per day. Of those, 80% are negative and 95% are exactly the same repetitive thoughts as the day before.

How do you quiet all that underlying negativity and pivot away from the repetition that your brain loves to bask in? There is no shortage of self help available on the subject. Personally I really like the New York Times best seller, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by Charles Duhigg.

According to Duhigg there is a neurological pattern that consists of three elements: a cue, a routine, and a reward. Understanding and identifying these components which govern any habit can help to change bad habits or form good ones.

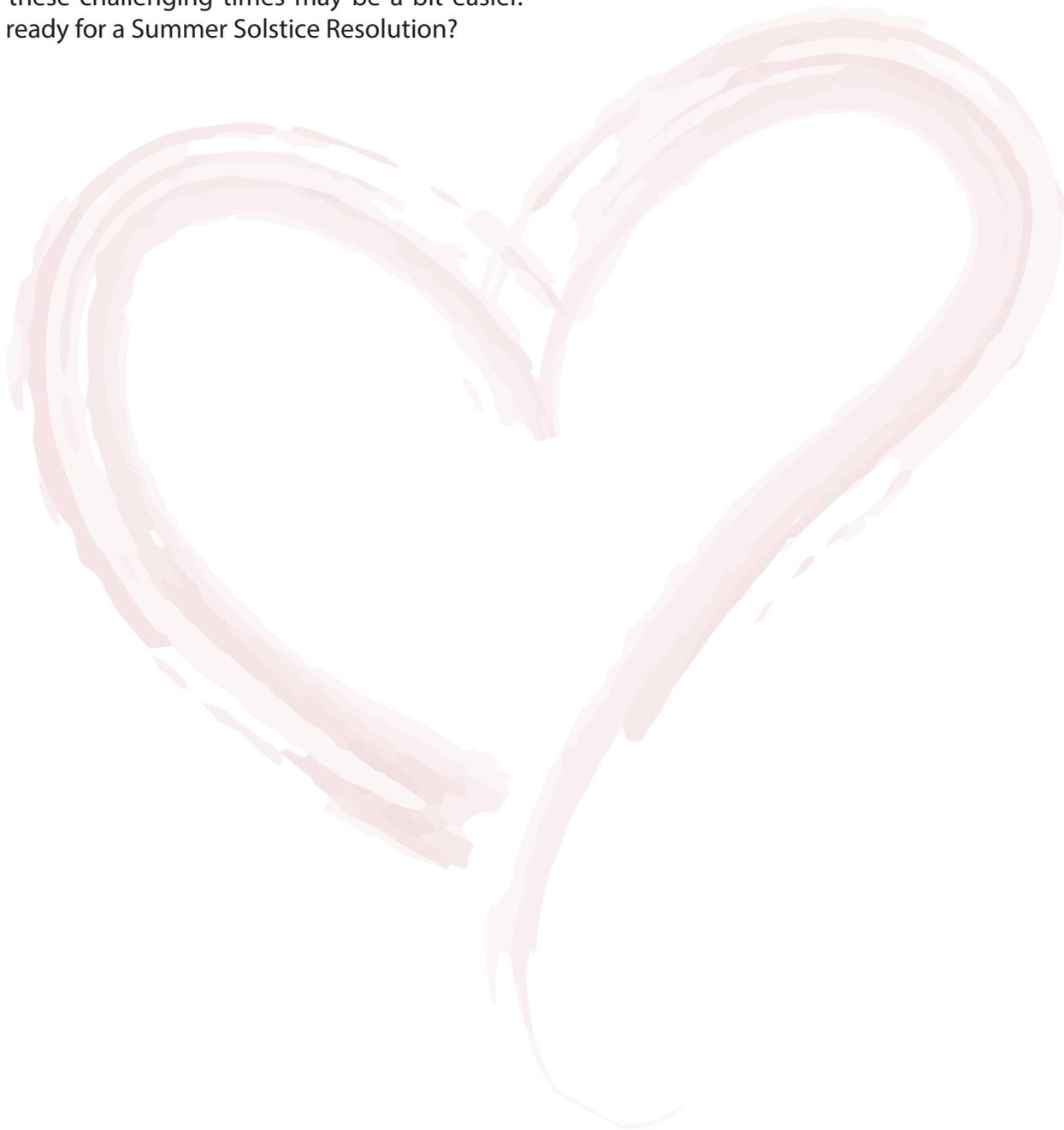
Duhigg recommends writing out your plan and posting it where you will see it. When you read through the flowchart, you will most certainly see that this requires commitment and work. If it were easy, we would all be perfect and life would be pretty boring. Reaching for that next challenge is what keeps us young and is uniquely human.

Working on keystone habits, as Duhigg outlines, has a spillover effect. For example, getting more organized will free up time for exercise, spending time with family, or getting more sleep. Each situation is unique to you and your personal goals and challenges.

When working on changing behaviors there is a misconception among the general population that it is our own personal feelings that direct our thoughts. The experts contend that it is exactly the opposite. There is a consensus among researchers that action (or inaction) starts with one's thoughts. The thoughts initiate feelings which lead to behaviors.

Step outside the box to consider that it is your thoughts that create your feelings which direct your actions. Circle back to the beginning of this discussion on the primitive brain and does the light pop on? Most of the chatter in our head is negative, barely perceptible and directs us back to the status quo. Therefore, if we start with intentional goal directed thoughts and an action plan we can override our inner caveman.

Most importantly, fellow baby boomers, why are we talking about long days and good habits? For those who have been a caregiver for an aging family member or friend, the days are long whatever the season. If we can get our figurative house in order with good habits, these challenging times may be a bit easier. Who is ready for a Summer Solstice Resolution?



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