

It's a new year - go ahead and find the new you

By [Flint Journal staff](#)

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This may be the year to answer that nagging question: How can I stick to my resolutions and finally make the changes I want to make in my life?

Losing weight

Marilyn Ann Migliore, psychotherapist, nutritionist, author and weight-loss specialist at the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor, is the founder of The Hunger Within Workshop, a 12-week treatment program designed to break the cycle of emotional eating.

Migliore said we all set negative traps that set us up for diet failure.

"Most people know that they need to eat less and exercise more," she said. "It's knowing the answers and not acting on them, that's what makes them feel so desperate."

The key is unraveling the psychological underpinnings, or life script, that's constantly replayed in your subconscious to trigger bad food choices.

"The script was written in childhood," Migliore said. "We all need to throw out the script and slowly write a new one that allows and even encourages us to make better choices."

The first step is realizing when the life script is playing.

"You need to identify the role that negative thoughts play in sabotaging your mental health," Migliore said. "If you can avoid the following five common diet-sabotaging thought traps, you'll be on the road to a healthier, happier self this year."

- **Shoulda, coulda, woulda:** You fill your thoughts with so many "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts," not to mention "musts" and "oughts," that the inevitable consequence is guilt.

- **Eliminate the positive:** You consistently find ways to trivialize your accomplishments while at the same time exaggerating the significance of anything anyone else achieves.

- **Accentuate the negative:** You blow up the significance of your mistakes so that they

become as disastrous as the sinking of the Titanic.

- **False advertising:** You attach a negative label to yourself instead of the event or situation.

- **Either/or thinking:** In the alphabet of your thoughts, there is an 'A' and a 'Z' and nothing in between.

"Make this year the year you vow to put yourself first and abandon those negative thoughts that keep you stuck in old behavior patterns related to food and eating, said Migliore. "As with any journey, there may be some bumps along the road but it's up to you to trek forward knowing that you'll have made your mental, physical and psychological health the priority."

The holidays are a challenging time for making healthy choices because for so many of us, this time of year triggers family memories and traditions that we don't want to lose.

"We need a new ritual to maintain the connection with Mom, for instance," Migliore said. "Once there's a new connection established then you can let go of the eating-food connection."

Rewiring the brain takes time, she said. "Both verbal and nonverbal messages help write script when we're children, and it basically dictates our relationship with food."

Marketing strategies used by food corporations reinforce our desires, Migliore said.

"Think about it. Happy Meals. Hershey's Kisses," Migliore said. "Food is probably the No. 1 mood-altering substance. The doctor gives you a lollipop, so the nonverbal message is that when you're hurting food makes you feel better."