



HOW TO KEEP NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS

Christmas and the New Year are over. Somehow all the new toys seem to be broken, yet there are still bits of cold turkey in the fridge. You have vowed never to eat and drink again. New Year resolutions have been made, but you feel disappointed as you remember the ones from last year that never made it past the first week of January. This year you hope will be different, but the fact that in the first week of your new diet you are eating a cream cake means the signs are not good.

The first action you need to take is to appreciate your achievements. Think back over the last year and make a list of absolutely everything you have achieved. This is supposed to be a long list, so include everything, be it large or small. We so often forget what we've achieved and - perverse creatures that we are - seem to prefer to focus on all the things we haven't managed to do. What will really surprise you about what you have achieved is that it is always more than we ever imagine. Acknowledging your successes on a regular basis is a very important, productive activity.

Secondly, create a vision for the following year. For this exercise, you are going to look forward to the end of next year. Imagine that 2008 is drawing to a close and you are really satisfied with all the elements of your life. You've made all the changes you wanted and have achieved everything you set out to do. What would that look like? Write a description of your life, as you'd like it to look by the end of 2008. It's important to write in the present, positive tense, as if it has already happened. Be as specific as possible: for example, your children are at the school hoped for, you have got the promotion you desired. You may like to use headings as prompts, such as, Health, Lifestyle, Relationships, Finance, Business and Children.

If you don't enjoy writing, you could put together a visual representation instead - either by drawing or painting it yourself or cutting pictures and words out of magazines. Be as creative as you like. You can include your partner or even the whole family in this exercise to create a 'family vision' of what they want to achieve in the coming year.

It's amazing how powerful this exercise can be. I often ask new clients to do this task - describing how their life will look when they have made all the changes they desire. It's so affirming for them to be able to look back at their description months later and to see - in black and white or full colour - that they've done all they set out to do.

Creating this vision can be a very exciting experience for all concerned, but remember not to get too carried away (especially when the children are helping out). Step back and ask yourself what can reasonably be achieved and how you will know when it has been achieved.

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Most New Year resolutions fail within the first week, as they are too ambitious and not grounded in reality. Take your vision and make it specific. If being fitter is your resolution, set yourself a goal of doing an activity that will show you you have reached your desired level of fitness. If your goal is to run a mile, set a time limit in order to achieve it, then plan the stages you need to reach that goal. The most important step you can take towards achieving your resolution is the first one. Take that step right NOW.

To achieve your resolution you need to be motivated. There are two kinds of motivation, positive and negative - it's best to have them both working for you. Firstly, there is the positive motivation of how brilliant it will be to have achieved your resolution. Secondly, the negative motivation looks at what it would cost you (and those around you) should you let it slip.

Share your resolution with friends and family. If it is a family vision, you can mutually support each other. If the resolution is just yours, they can encourage, support and cajole you into sticking to it. When you and your family look back next Christmas on the achievements of 2008, think of how proud you will all be and what a fantastic example it will be for your children.

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