

Stop Making Resolutions, Start Setting Goals

Here we are again! It's the beginning of the New Year and many of us have a laundry list of things we would like to have or change about ourselves. The old year has left us with situations that we would much rather forget and as the calendar rolls over, we are presented with the opportunity to begin anew. New Year's resolutions become the magic wand that is suppose to bring us better health, a better job, higher pay or more loving relationships. Yet, by the time the excitement of watching the ball drop in Times Square wears off and we have discarded the Christmas tree, most people have dropped their resolutions and slipped back into their old ways.

Year after year they find themselves trapped in the never ending cycle of setting resolutions that are never realized. There is a better way. Stop making resolutions - those floating, pie-in-the-sky wishes - and start setting goals. Resolutions promise short term quick fixes. They represent a strong desire to effect change in a particular area of your life, but do not necessarily have or engender real mechanisms for change. Unfortunately, you cannot get new results with old habits. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Of what use to make heroic vows of amendment if the same old lawbreaker is to keep them?"

Goals are not quick fix disjointed attempts to improve your life but rather are integral parts of a systematic approach towards growth and success. They are the building blocks for the long term vision you have for your life and actively pursuing them allows you to develop positive habits that lead to lasting changes. Resolutions are one-time attempts to reap short term benefits and are thus more likely to be abandoned in the face of difficulties; as oppose to goals which, as part of a long term strategy, cultivate repeated thought and habit patterns which lead to permanent change.

Here are some suggestions that I believe you will find helpful as you work to effect change and improve your life in the New Year:

Begin with the end in mind

The first thing you have to do is decide what you want your life to be like 5, 10, 15 years or more from now. What kind

of growth do you want to experience? What milestones do you want to reach? Break down your ideal life into the following categories:

- Prosperity: finances, job or business, assets
- Health: nutrition, exercise, weight management,
- Relationships: Spouse/life partner, family, friends
- Lifestyle: leisure, personal development, spirituality

A long term vision allows you to create a deliberate plan for fulfilling that vision unlike resolutions which are more like stabbing in the dark.

Create a plan

Once you have crafted your vision it's time to start developing a plan to turn it into reality. Planning brings your goals into sharper focus. It forces you to set a timeframe, identify resources and break your goals into tiny manageable steps. These baby steps also make it easier to embrace the change that is necessary for goal attainment.

Monitor your progress

An added benefit of creating a detailed plan for your goals is the fact that it becomes your road map - a guiding light to fulfill your vision. This makes it easier to monitor your progress. If you don't monitor your progress:

How will you know if you are heading in the right direction?

How will you know how close or far away you are from achieving your goals?

Persevere

There will be setbacks and difficulties on your way to achieving your goals. This is a fact of life that we all have to accept. You must realize that the only way around this is through perseverance. There is always a way to your goals no matter how arduous and dark it might get sometimes. Your job is to find it!

Visualize

You cannot be what you cannot see. In other words, it is imperative that you create a mental picture of the person you would like to become. The more you practice this mental imaging the more you will find yourself acting in a manner consistent with the vision you've created until it becomes a reality.

Keep on Pushing!