
Setting Resolutions that Work

SETTING RESOLUTIONS THAT WORK

by Kathleen Gage

Are you known to set resolutions and not get the results you hoped for? Have you already broken some you set for this year? Is this a similar behavior from the past? Would you like to finally set objectives that are realistic and achievable, both personally and professionally?

One primary reason people do not follow through on their objectives is that they set unrealistic goals and don't have a clearly outlined plan. Another reason people have a difficult time is that their objectives are not balanced. They focus too much energy in one area or another without creating balance overall. And still another reason is that they focus on external changes rather than internal.

When we are in balance internally (emotionally and spiritually) the external seems to take care of itself. So often, the resolutions we set are based on what we think we should be doing or what someone else tells us we should be doing rather than what is in the natural order for us to do. Things such as I should quit smoking, I should lose weight, I should make more money, I should get married.

Some of what we think needs to change is based on pressures from outside ourselves. Pressures that may come from the media, authority figures, parents, husband, wife, significant other, children, or the church. And many of those changes are based on fear and guilt.

Take the media. Why is it that some advertisers spend millions of dollars annually on their campaigns? Because they know it works. They know if they tell people over and over that if they aren't the perfect size, with the perfect hair color, sporting the perfect clothes brand and wearing the right fragrance that they are not measuring up, people will often believe it. Who says the advertisers are right? They do and so often we believe them.

The way to set resolutions that work is to find out what is true to you. And the way to do that is to get to know who you are and what is important to you. Many people have gotten so far removed from who they are perhaps the first resolution would be to take time with themselves - to really get to know who they are. Unfortunately, people tend to get so caught up in the external factors that they push aside the very thing that will create the balance for them - their emotional and spiritual well-being.

It takes time and commitment to create that balance. The commitment to do what you need to do for you. This is not about being selfish, it is about being true to who you are. And the more true we are to ourselves the more we have to offer to others. It's about noticing what your values are and living by your values. Values are those things that are important to us. Things such as family, love, integrity, contribution to community, fidelity, health, spirituality, fun, laughter, sharing, learning. The list goes on and on. And you determine for you what the list will contain. What may be important to one person may not be important to another.

I'm not suggesting that you not have goals. Actually, just the opposite. I am a very goal oriented person myself. What I have discovered, though, is that in order to accomplish my goals they have to be aligned with my values. It is when I am out of alignment I tend to struggle and have to work so hard trying to make things happen. When they are in alignment things seem to flow. It is also when I am clear on what my true desire is that things become much easier to accomplish.

For example, maybe you decided for your resolution to quit smoking or to lose weight because you just think that is what you should do. Those may only be surface resolutions and therefore within a short period you break your resolutions.

If, however, you are really clear about how important quality time with family and being close to nature is you may realize the fact you are not in good physical condition prevents you from sharing time with your family outdoors then you are moving into a deeper reason for keeping your resolutions. You are moving towards your values. That is why time with yourself to determine what is truly important is so instrumental in accomplishing our desires.

It is also important to have a plan behind your goals. It's one thing to desire something. It's another to have a plan of action put in place. In that plan of action have small steps you can take to move closer to your final result. Then you must take action. In taking action it helps to remind ourselves that each moment we have is what life is about. It is not about what is going to happen next year, in a month, in a week, or even in the next hour. It is about what is happening right now and what we are doing in each and every moment. This is life and the time is now.

What many people have a tendency to do is to beat themselves up if they don't succeed the first time

around. There is a chance that if you are making a major shift in your life you may not accomplish it on the first try. However, people tend to be so hard on themselves. It has to be black or white. There are many shades of gray in between. Be gentle on yourself. That is why you break it down into steps.

Think about a baby learning to walk. Initially, they fall down. Then they get up. Fall down. Get up. Fall down. Get up. Eventually, they are walking. Most people will not discourage a child as they learn to walk. Instead they encourage them. And yet, with ourselves, if we don't get it right the first time we think we have failed. Failure is a state of mind. It is also an opportunity learn what didn't work in our plan and move closer to what does. We can learn from the times we fall down.

For me, a huge part of the action is to ask for guidance. Guidance from the source of all things. Guidance to have the willingness to accept the things I absolutely cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

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