



MAKING YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS A REALITY!

By Yvonne Thomas, Ph.D.

Well, here we are starting a new year, and usually this is when I see two interesting phenomenon occur: 1) now, people are very seriously identifying and trying to achieve some goals; and 2) after so enthusiastically trying to do this, the person loses interest and/or motivation and the goal is often left to be tackled down the road (i.e., for the following year's New Year's Resolutions, etc.). It's amazing how like clock-work these two events can keep recurring – and how frustrated, confused, and disappointed a person can feel about discontinuing his/her pursuit of a goal that matters to him or her.

There are many reasons why people are motivated and enthusiastic to make changes in January. Some people see a new year as a time for renewal and new opportunity; for others, starting a new year signifies the passage of time that can hasten them towards wanting to make some life changes. In general, at any time of year, it's hard to look at oneself and determine what one needs to add or subtract from one's life, because that entails changing something, and for most people, change is kind of scary. That view is one of the two comments I continually hear regarding the concept of "change" from people who are setting, working towards, and achieving their goals (I'll get to the second comment later). When one does take the time and courage to set forth one's goals, I believe that person genuinely does want to attain these goals and change something. It's the working towards a goal until it's reached, however, that can be the hardest part.

Change certainly takes patience and commitment. Adding or eliminating ways of behaving, thinking, or feeling takes some time, reorganization, and practice. But, once change does take place, the impact can be very significant, moving, and profound for those who had the tenacity to keep working on their goals. And do those people feel proud of themselves. You see, that's the other thing about "change" that I keep hearing from those who have achieved their goals: change is more exciting than scary for them!

There are several ways a person can maintain one's motivation, focus, and courage and keep pursuing those goals that matter most to him or her. One can break a goal down into manageable pieces that can be tackled bit by bit over time in a way that is not overwhelming or stressful. Making a concrete game-plan by writing down a schedule where one has carved out time devoted specifically to working on each of these pieces can increase one's commitment to and follow-through in reaching a goal. Varying the tasks associated with attaining the goal can diminish monotony, disinterest, resentment, etc. If needed, give oneself some rewards along the way after accomplishing some of these pieces and tasks. Even though one could say that the accomplishment alone should feel rewarding, it's not always enough for some people who feel they have accomplished something only if they have reached the goal, and unfortunately do not acknowledge the steps it takes to get there. Periodically make a point to remind oneself about the reason you want this goal to be achieved so much (i.e., "If I start exercising, or more frequently, I will feel more energized, less winded, and more physically healthy," etc.). If these tips are not enough to sustain one in achieving his or her goals, seeking some professional guidance from a Psychologist could lead to some wonderful, empowering life changes.

Happy New Year, and may you set, work toward, and achieve your New Year's Resolutions!

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