

10 New Year's Resolutions

So what does life expect of you in 2002? Better yet, what do you expect of yourself? Well, here's the defining truth of the new year: we are all being held to a higher standard. The age of indulgence ended on Sept. 11. It's now the age of accountability.

So here are 10 of the best New Year's resolutions you can make.

1. Resolve to stay brutally optimistic. See the opportunity in every difficulty and anticipate the most favorable outcome out of every situation. Whatever you look for, that's what you'll find. We can get better or we can get bitter; it all depends on the lessons we draw from each experience. Optimism is like electricity -- very little happens without it. Know this truth: you have all the resources you'll ever need to handle all the challenges you'll ever have. It's in the true emergencies that the true you emerges.

2. Resolve to identify the most powerful benefit you offer to the people around you and then deliver it. "The purpose of life," said George Bernard Shaw, "is a life of purpose." What's yours? Where are you investing your personal energy: self-preservation or adding value to others? Here's the well-being paradox: if you're only concerned about yourself, you cannot take care of yourself. Only by helping others can you succeed.

3. Resolve to pump up your personal vitality. In the game of life it's not about who's right, it's about who's left. Over 60 per cent of us are more than 36 years old. The real currency of the new century is not cash, it's vitality. It's the ability to keep going every day of every week of every month of the year with vigour and verve. All you are to the people around you is a source of energy and you cannot give what you don't have. Ninety per cent of all adults do no physical exercise at all. More than half of us are overweight. A third of us still smoke. So, this year, resolve to enhance your physical, emotional and mental vitality. Take just a small step. First you'll amaze yourself and then you'll amaze everybody else.

4. Resolve to be habitually generous. Success is not something you pursue, it's something you attract by what you become. The more you give of yourself, the more favours you attract from others. People have a deep-rooted drive to give back. So resolve to search for ways to contribute to others. Here's an interesting aphorism: Live above the line. If the line represents others' expectations of you, consistently surpass those expectations. You'll develop what the business author Ken Blanchard calls "raving fans," people who become walking billboards for you.

5. Resolve to go on a mental diet. Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can scar you for life. It's humans, not elephants, who never forget. So resolve to use the language of conciliation, not the language of confrontation. Avoid the temptation to vent your negativity

on others. Instead, use words that express your joie de vivre and connection with others.

6. Resolve to be a global citizen, fully open to the cultures and influences of others. There is a direct correlation between personal well-being and openness to other peoples' ideas and cultures. If someone has a different point of view, they're probably right as well. There are no absolutes anymore, so welcome different opinions. Become a one-person champion of plurality. Not only will you make lots of new friends, but you'll also gather multiple reference points to help you resolve personal challenges.

7. Resolve to take control of your destiny. Don't be so busy trying to make a living that you forget to make a life. Decide who you want to be and what you want to achieve and then stride boldly towards your vision. The most precious human commodity today is confidence.

8. Resolve to increase your human connectedness. The person with the best connections wins. The wider your network, the more opportunities you generate. It's all about trust. And it's all about profile -- your presence in the minds of the people who matter. So invest at least 10 per cent of your time broadening your sphere of influence. Connect other people to opportunities within your network: cross-pollinate their potential. When you are with others, make every encounter a pleasurable one. When you listen, truly listen. And burn your fear of rejection.

9. Resolve to increase your creativity by letting go of the familiar. Nothing is as far away as yesterday. Try to see the world through fresh eyes every day. As Salman Rushdie writes, every year is the Stone Age to the year that follows it. Listen to your intuition and follow your instincts, they'll tell you what to do before your head has had a chance to figure it out. You are a Picasso or Einstein at something. Discover what it is and then develop it to the maximum.

10. Resolve to be you because others are already taken. You and I are at our best when we're being authentic. We're at our best when we're being positively spontaneous because that's when all our energy is being invested in the person in front of us or the task at hand. In a hyper-competitive world, we cannot afford to second-guess ourselves. Success in the new, new age is all about speed. So act now, because if not now, when?

So there you have it, 10 New Year's resolutions to help improve your life in 2002. So decide. And act.

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