

Remembering The Old, Ringing In The New

As the old year ends and the new one begins, we feel a strong compulsion to make a clean sweep: get rid of everything that didn't work, that disappointed us, that failed us or deceived us, that didn't measure up, that didn't fulfill its promise.

We start to think of new goals, new directions, new beginnings; and we make a list of resolutions to demonstrate our resolve. Of course, a week later, we can't even find the scrap of paper we wrote it on.

I've gone through this exercise every year for as long as I can remember. When the list does turn up—some time during the summer or fall—I'm amazed how much I've forgotten or neglected. Daily exercise, clearing out the basement, learning a new language, finishing my new book...my good intentions have led me down the road to hell.

Well, not quite. There's still a little time left to catch up, and there's always Next Year!

And it's that Next Year I'm thinking of now. Because the point is not so much what I didn't do, but what I did do, and what I want to keep on doing.

I think before we make a list of new resolutions, we should make a list of our accomplishments: things that worked, things we enjoyed, and things that fell into our lives and made a positive difference.

For example, a new friendship, a journey to an unfamiliar place, seizing an unexpected opportunity, or making a change of plans that turned out surprisingly well. Let's keep these things going for the coming year, and

let's keep ourselves open to receive more.

The trouble with New Year's resolutions is not only that they are quickly forgotten, but they tend to set us up for failure and subsequent guilt. Certainly, we should review the past year and examine the things that fell short, or badly went wrong, and try to learn the lessons from that. Certainly, we should set some goals for the new year. But shouldn't we also underline the things that went right, and the things that nearly went right?—the things we want to hold on to, nurture, and improve.

Maybe we should make three lists!
1) What we want to DISCARD (the useless and outworn, everything that is bogging us down).

2) What we want to DEVELOP (the proven and the potential, everything that holds promise and joy).

3) What we want to DISCOVER (the new directions and the unexpected detours).

Yes, it will take a little more work and a lot more reflection than merely drawing up a single list of resolutions, but this could start the new year off on a positive note, with clarity and hope.

May 2005 be an excellent year for you!

Joan Z. Shore lives in Paris and Ft. Lauderdale and is the author of "Saging—How to Grow Older and Wiser" which is available at Books & Books (Coral Gables), Borders (Boca Raton and Ft. Lauderdale), Classic Bookstore (Palm Beach) and by e-mail: joanzshore@yahoo.com



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