

Resolutions

Setting Intentions for the New Year

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THE NEW YEAR IS A WONDERFUL TIME TO reflect on 2011 and to set our course for 2012. If we reflect on our growth each year, re-anchor our intentions, it is very likely we will live a happier and more fulfilling life.

Before writing down a “to do list” for the new year, why not look back at the and see what we learned from it:

WHAT WERE THE PLEASANT OR UNPLEASANT INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED IN 2011?

We tend to remember the pleasant, unpleasant, or the most recent occasions. But reflecting on both pleasant and unpleasant things reminds us joy is there, and that there are challenge in life. After you have written down the two answers, think about:

WHAT LESSONS DID I LEARN FROM 2011?

Instead of dwelling in the details of what happened, why it happened, how it happened, why me? This question gives us an opportunity to take responsibility for our actions and to understand we have full power to create our possible future. When you look back at the challenges you had in 2011, you might notice they were actually teachings in disguise. Challenges stop us, invite us to step out of our comfort zone and refine our way of doing things. Challenges stretch our limit and we end up being stronger than we ever thought we could be. Some incidences teach you how to avoid certain actions, but if you look deeper at the challenges, and especially the way we react to the challenges, they actually

tell us more about ourselves, especially our conditioned behavior.

Our conditioned behavior (you might call it your personality) drives our thoughts, speech, and actions (most of the time) without awareness. When we are not aware of our habitual behavior, they sometimes lead to regrets later.

I challenge you to look deeper at your conditioned behaviors and notice how it is shaping your life. Is your habitual behavior taking you in the direction you want to head to in your life? Or does it lead you astray? This is a good check point for you to re-route your path if you notice you are not going where you want to go in life.

The more you are aware of your behavioral patterns, the easier it is to control habit energies rather to have your habit control you. So when you notice you are about to lose your patience (if that is your habitual pattern), you can stop, take a few breathes, and that gives you some space before you react the way you always have. Your awareness might come after you lost your patience, but eventually, you will be skillful enough to catch your habitual behavior before it arises. Now we move to another question to ourselves:

IN WHAT WAYS DID I GROW IN 2011?

This question allows us to acknowledge our strength, our power, and our wisdom. Perfectionists, especially, tend to spend most of our time “fixing” or “correcting” ourselves, “correcting” situations, correcting others, we do not leave ourselves much time to acknowledge the good qualities in ourselves. But the interesting thing about

self acknowledgement as opposed to self criticism is self acknowledgement makes us more powerful, and self criticism makes us small and weak. We can only grow what we have; we cannot grow what we do not have. Instead of looking for what’s missing, try expanding what we already have. When our mind is in a more powerful position, it is much for likely for things to happen in the way we want them to be.

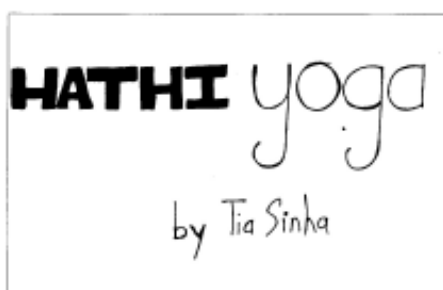
Now, after much reflection on the past year, we are ready to set our intention for 2012. Notice we use the word intention, instead of goal. In case you want to understand the difference between an intention and a goal, here is the dictionary definition:

Intention: purpose or attitude toward the effect of one’s actions or conduct

Goal: the result or achievement toward which effort is directed; aim; end

The two are very similar, but an intention directs our attention to the journey, and the goal directs our focus to the end. When we focus on the goal, we tend to miss the means to the end. If we are not mindful with the path we take, it is easy to become lost in the way and not be able to make it to the goal.

The future is made of the present, so the better we live our present, the more beautiful the future will be. A good practice to remind yourself to be present is to ask yourself from time to time: “what am I doing?” Then take a few breathes, allow yourself to come back and focus on the task at hand.



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So we would like to set intentions for 2012, rather than setting goals. Which means, when you write down your list, it should be something workable, completely under your control, rather than setting a goal in which you set the subconscious mind to be passive and wait for results. The more specific your intention, the more likely you will be to accomplish it, and become closer to the goal. On the other hand, the more general your intention is, the less likely you will be able to achieve it. Another thing you need to bear in mind is the intention needs to be realistic, not something that sets you up for failure - it should be something you can start right now, rather than waiting for other conditions to happen.

Here is an example of what not to do:

1. I would like to be able to do headstand by the end of 2012.
2. I would like to spend more time with my family in 2012.

The first example focuses on the goal rather than the intention and it does not provide us any graspable action to the goal; it does not give us any specific to-do actions for us to walk towards the goal. So the first intention would be more constructive as:

1. "I will practice headstand preparations (whatever stage you are working on) xxx days a week." (if you do not know how to start the headstand, then phase it in this way: I will ask my teacher to help me with headstand and start practicing for xxx days a week or take private lesson xxx days a week.)

If you write your intention this way, instantly, you can start walking towards the goal and you feel powerful and inspired right away.

Now, let's rewrite the second example:

2. I will join my family for dim sum on Sundays, and I will take my daughter to Disneyland during the Chinese New Year.

Writing the intention this way is very easy to understand and apply, allowing us to see our shift in action right away.

I hope these tips help you shape your new year, allowing you to tap into your inner power and strength.

I leave you with something from the



Bhagavad

Gita: Do your duty without attaching to the fruits of the results. Do your best but knowing there are many uncontrollable variables to our future. We cannot make our future, but we can create our possible future.

A committed student of Buddhism and yoga, Janet teaches at Pure Yoga, Causeway Bay in Hong Kong.



Welcoming
Simon Low
 Yin and Yang Yoga Workshops
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