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THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!



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The start of a new year is always a good time to take stock of what we've accomplished, and to look forward with anticipation and an open mind to what lies ahead. Yet, it is also a good idea to examine our lives regularly, to see if we need to change anything in order to reach our full potential and make our lives more fulfilling.

Sometimes circumstances force us to make changes, too. We move to a new location, take a new job, attend a new school, and form new relationships.

Whether our circumstances dictate it, or we choose to ourselves, making a fresh start is not always easy, especially when it involves making personal changes or creating new habits. Sometimes the things we resolve to accomplish or are forced to change are so formidable, that we have a hard time getting started, or conversely, we procrastinate and try to put some things off until later, hoping that we'll get around to it some other time.

Fortunately, we're not alone in our struggles, and there are many accounts of people who worked through the obstacles they faced to begin anew, cultivate new mindsets, try something new, or form new habits, one step at a time.

I hope the articles and true stories of people who succeeded in this issue of *Motivated* will encourage you to give your personal resolutions an honest try, and that your efforts will result in wonderful new beginnings.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*



Begin Again

By Elisabeth, Blog Reprint

It is never too late to begin again. Every moment is an opportunity to start fresh. No matter how futile a situation may seem, it is never too late to begin anew. Just as we like to view each New Year as an opportunity to begin again, so too can we view each day, and even each moment, as a chance for a fresh start.

Whatever has not been working can be given a second—or third or tenth—chance by choosing a starting-over attitude. A discussion turning into an argument can be stopped and started anew. A relationship that is struggling can be given a chance to begin again.

Age, health, education, time, experience, opportunity, history, resources, and location are oft-used excuses for not starting something over. Fear is usually the real culprit.

Starting something over can be scary, scary enough to make staying the same preferable, however toxic, unhealthy, or growth inhibiting that may be.

Don't allow fear or excuses to prevent you from making every situation the best it can be. If something is not going the way that you wish it to, or working out as best it can, seize the opportunity in every moment to begin again. ◆



How to Find Hope

Web Reprint, adapted

It's present in every one of us—the human characteristic called “hope” that, at high enough levels, helps you move beyond fear and circumvent despair. By developing your ability to hope you can achieve a greater sense of happiness, contentment, and success. Here's how, based on actual research that identified what happens when someone has higher levels of hope:

1. High hoppers dream big. They use their imagination to project themselves into the future, painting a picture in their minds of what they want for their lives, regardless of what they have currently. To develop and maintain high hope, don't be afraid to play around with possibilities—what could be, rather than what is. Imagine the best possible life you could have. That's your starting point. Then move on from there.

2. Accept that no one has total control over their life; that your future desires are possibilities, not guaranteed probabilities. Be playful about this. Become excited about the

nature of possibility. If you tend to be risk-averse, then practice becoming more comfortable with risk by doing something a little more “out there” than you would normally do, every day, or at least once a week. To benefit from higher hope you will need to be more receptive to what life offers you.

3. Think of the future in terms of the past and the present. Okay, so you've imagined some desired future outcome and come to realize that what you want is completely different from what you have right now. That can bring up some awkward thoughts and negative emotions. Things like, “I'm becoming depressed just thinking about how stuck I am here.” Here's the trick. You need to learn how to avoid such negative thoughts and emotions by finding positive alternatives. How can you do that? By finding evidence in your past or present of things that are close to what you want. These hope-filled messages will help mitigate the typical voices—in your own head as well as from others—that say, “You can't do that; you'll never get what you want.”

4. Time to strategize. Everyone has goals. Higher hoppers are even smarter than that, because they also have back-up plans. Having one thing to aim for is all very well, but life sometimes has a tendency to throw us curveballs. If you have multiple options going on at the same time, however, then you'll be less invested in having that ONE thing happen perfectly.

5. Values. One of the biggest differences between lower hope and higher hope individuals is that the latter set goals based on personal values. They view their goals in the context of contributing to society or giving something back. Their reasons behind their goals go way beyond getting a certain job, or earning a certain amount of money. Ensure your goals are deeply, personally meaningful to you. Ask yourself, "How will I feel when I have achieved this goal?" not simply, "What will I get?"

6. Seek help from others. There is a strong relationship between hope and social connectedness. It's not that higher hope people have more friends or family, but they feel more connected to those around them, and they make this work for them by asking for help. One of the most attractive, magnetic words in the English language is "please." Add to that "can you help me?" and you'll be amazed at the doors that open for you.

7. Work on helping yourself. It's going to be harder to achieve what you want for the future if you tend to become swayed by what's going on in the present. Higher hope individuals pay attention to the world around them, but

they also pay attention to themselves. They are highly attuned to negative thoughts and emotions, and they know what they need to do to move out of the downward spiral back to feeling and thinking in positive, personally motivational ways. Develop the personal resources, like having back-up plans, that increase your chance of making that desired future a reality.

8. Find the benefit in whatever happens. Hope isn't optimism. It isn't putting a smiley face on everything, pretending that things are alright when they aren't, but there are some similarities. Not least of these is the propensity to look for the good in whatever happens to you. If you take the approach that every experience is valuable, then you'll begin to see that your future desire has only been delayed a little longer, not that it's being denied you. Train yourself to remain open and flexible to whatever happens in your life. Deliberately look for the benefits in any situation, so you have that wonderful anticipation and excitement to hold on a little longer, before you achieve what you desire.

9. Above all, remember that "to hope" is to be always wondering—with intense interest and excitement—about what is around the corner. If you had everything you could possibly want, you wouldn't need to hope. We can hope for success if it is seen as some progress toward your chosen goals—as grand or as simple as they may be. We can hope because we're meant to find the journey exhilarating, rather than only judge our worth by the arrival at our destination. ♦



Forming New Habits

By Curtis Peter Van Gorder

The month of January, when the new year is celebrated in most of the world, is named after the Roman god Janus. Because he had two faces, he could look back on the past year and forward into the next. He was the god of beginnings and the guardian of doors.

Making resolutions at the start of a new year is an ancient and established tradition. Apparently, the early Babylonians' most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment.

We make resolutions, but we don't seem well equipped to keep them. One reason we have a hard time changing old bad habits or forming good new ones is that sometimes our expectations are too extreme. Instead of making some gradual permanent lifestyle changes, we want instant success.

Fitness guru Jack LaLanne (1914–2011), who continued with his daily exercise regimen well into his 90s, observed, “The average person means well, but they set their goals too high. They [try] it two or three times and say, ‘This is too tough.’ And they quit.”

When I used to do private English tutoring in Indonesia and Japan, I was confronted with this type of unrealistic expectations. Many of my students thought that if they hired a native

English speaker to give them lessons, they would learn through some sort of magical osmosis, without doing the homework and study needed to make progress. It just doesn't work that way. We're conditioned to want quick results, whereas in reality, it often takes work over an extended period of time to achieve anything worthwhile.

Messages are sent along the pathways of our brain through neurons that are connected to one another. These like to travel on known pathways, the “comfortable” way, and it takes time and effort to create new ones.

Carlo DiClemente, chairperson of the psychology department at the University of Maryland, suggests setting realistic goals and making daily progress to realize them: “We all wish some things. We might say, ‘I wish I were a better parent.’ But that's pretty vague. Maybe you say, ‘I'm going to count to five before I start yelling at my kids.’ That's good, but then you discover you need a plan to remind you to count to five.”

Armed with the right goals, the desire, and the persistence, you can form a new habit this year—or anytime. You can become the master—rather than the victim—of circumstances. ♦

Setting Goals and Reaching Them

By Ira Sharma

Some people have been so discouraged when they've failed to meet their goals that they've given up on having any at all, so that they aren't disappointed by the "inevitable" failure.

There's a lot of advice available today on this topic, and there isn't actually anything too tough or mysterious about setting and reaching your goals.

Here are five easy steps to follow for success.

Step 1:

What are you aiming for? Write down your goals for the year. Keep the list to a few top priorities: Too many can dilute focus and scatter your energy.

Step 2:

Take steps—even large, seemingly crazy ones—toward reaching your goals. The important thing is to kick-start the process. The fine-tuning can come later!

Try to focus on actions that will advance more than one of your goals at once. For example, taking your kids to the pool or riding a bike with your spouse would promote staying fit as well as spending time with your family.

Step 3:

Keep at it. You'll probably fail periodically, but don't give up: Pick up the pieces and start again! In fact, if you never fail, your goals are probably too easy and need to be revised.

Step 4:

Have fun! Enjoy the challenge! Fighting your fears and weaknesses in order to achieve your goals can be difficult, but it's also tremendously rewarding. Much of the appeal of running a marathon is the challenge. Make reaching your goals the "extreme sport" of your life.

Step 5:

Review the progress toward your goals on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. If you're serious about it, you'll put effort into it. If necessary, be open to tweaking your goals or the action you're taking to reach them, but be careful to not water down your original goal! ♦



New Perspectives

By Juliana Connolly, adapted

What a crazy year I've just been through! In the space of 12 months I left a job I'd had for five years, moved to a new country, went on an emotional rollercoaster, spent many sleepless nights worrying, and on it goes...

I'll admit, it was tough at times to live through, but now, with the benefit of hindsight, I'm seeing things somewhat differently. It's true I left a job, but I got a new and better position. Yes, I moved away from my old friends, but I've broadened my horizons and already made many new friends in my new situation. It's been an emotional rollercoaster for sure, but it's also been a learning experience. I might have worried a lot last year, but here I am at the dawn of a new year, safe and sound.

The start of a new year has always symbolized for me a time of reflection and evaluation on the year that's past, and I've learned to cherish my year-end analysis. With the passage of time, perspectives change, big issues turn to naught, fears dissolve, and wounds heal.

Perhaps the pithy proverb about "giving time to time" actually has truth to it.

Aside from it lending perspective to life, I find a second major benefit of looking back is identifying what I'd like to do differently this year. On this occasion, two things stand out:

- 1) I want to cultivate that quiet confidence I see in people who have learned the art of depending on God.
- 2) I want to think less about myself. Too many hours last year were spent worrying about me. Instead, I want to spend some of that time and energy on other people and things that matter

I don't know what this new year will bring. I'm sure it will include surprises, joys, sorrows—and sure, most likely even some sleepless nights. Yet, if in the heat of the most turbulent moments I can manage to remember that my perspective will most likely change in just a few months; if I can keep faith in God and the importance of helping others on my mind, no matter where I am or what I'm doing, then I know this year will be a success! ♦



My Living China Doll Plant

By Bonita Hele, adapted

When I was a child, we lived near an apartment complex that housed college students. At the end of the school year, the students would give away or sell cheaply whatever they didn't want to haul home.

One day, my brother brought me home a China Doll plant. My mom, who has a green thumb, said it was a good find. I took it to my room and would set it out on the front porch every few days for some sunshine. After I'd had the plant for a few months, its leaves started drooping and then falling off until there were no leaves left. When I asked my mom what was wrong, she said it had gone into hibernation. A plant without leaves held no interest for me, so I put it in the backyard with my mom's other potted plants, and there it stayed for quite some time, leafless and forlorn.

Then, one day, my mom brought a plant to my room. Yes, it was my China Doll, and there were tiny sprouts at the tips of its branches. Soon the sprouts grew into new shoots and leaves, and

eventually my plant was in full bloom again. This cycle continued over the years.

I eventually moved away from home and left the China Doll with my mom and her green thumb. In one letter, my mom wrote, "I thought your China Doll had finally died. I almost tossed it, but you know how I hate to throw away a plant. I waited a while, and sure enough, it grew back fuller than ever."

Last spring, I went to visit my mom. She has more time for gardening now that most of her kids have moved away, and the back yard was beautiful, full of aromatic rose bushes and flower-covered arbors and trellises ... and my China Doll was transplanted into a new pot. It had grown to at least four feet tall.

At this point, some things in my life—a few dreams and goals—seem to be hibernating, but in good time, just like that simple plant was created to begin anew and grow stronger year by year, I believe that my hopes and dreams will also blossom again. ♦

Driving to a New Mindset

By Margaret Moore, in *Life Changes*, adapted

Change doesn't happen unless we have a good dose of both motivation and confidence working together. And we can't let either slide even a bit. It's important to charge and recharge our motivational and confidence batteries daily.

But what exactly are we working to change? One reason that change isn't easy is that it has many moving parts. There are the destinations that we measure—objective numbers like the pounds on a scale, resting heart rate, fitting into the jeans we wore at age 25, or subjective numbers such as rating one's stress level or peace of mind on a scale of one to 10.

Then there are the things that we first learn how to do and then do consistently to reach our destination—new behaviors or habits such as using less oil in a dish to help us lose weight, practicing 15 minutes of meditation three evenings a week to improve mental clarity, or doing an intense 20 minutes on an exercise machine to relieve stress.

More fundamentally, what really must change—in order to acquire new habits that get us to our hoped-for destination—is our mind. Not just the new brain pathways that get laid down with lots of practice as we move from fragile and fledgling habits to don't-have-to-think-about habits. What we

think about ourselves, our limits, our opportunities, and the forces that affect us also needs to change. As Einstein said, “A problem cannot be solved at the same level that created it.” It's not possible to make lasting change in our lifestyles if our thinking isn't also transformed.

So how does one drive to a new mindset? We each live in a box that has a ceiling set by the limits of our perspectives. Changing your mind starts with pushing a hole through the ceiling and poking your head up to see something new for the first time. Maybe it's an “aha!” moment, or a discovery, a new insight, or a new realization. Eventually you've poked enough holes in the ceiling to rise up and reach an entirely new perspective.

You may ask, how can I coach myself to a new mindset? Let's say that this is the year you want to remove 10 excess pounds of fatty tissue that got deposited on your frame as you fretted more than ever about work and financial stresses in the past year or two. You are hitting your head on your ceiling with a bunch of thoughts. Let's examine how you might change them. Let's say that the most limiting thought is, “I would love to be more fit and energetic, but I do not have time to invest in getting and staying fit given my work and family responsibilities and my long commute.”

Now imagine your poking-through-the-ceiling thought: “I do have time to invest in getting and staying fit.” What would it take to get you to think that thought?

Put on your scientist’s cap and start designing some thought experiments. One idea might be, “I will get eight hours of work done in seven and a half hours if I use 30 minutes to exercise: 20 minutes to jog around my office building, and yoga stretches for 10 minutes.”

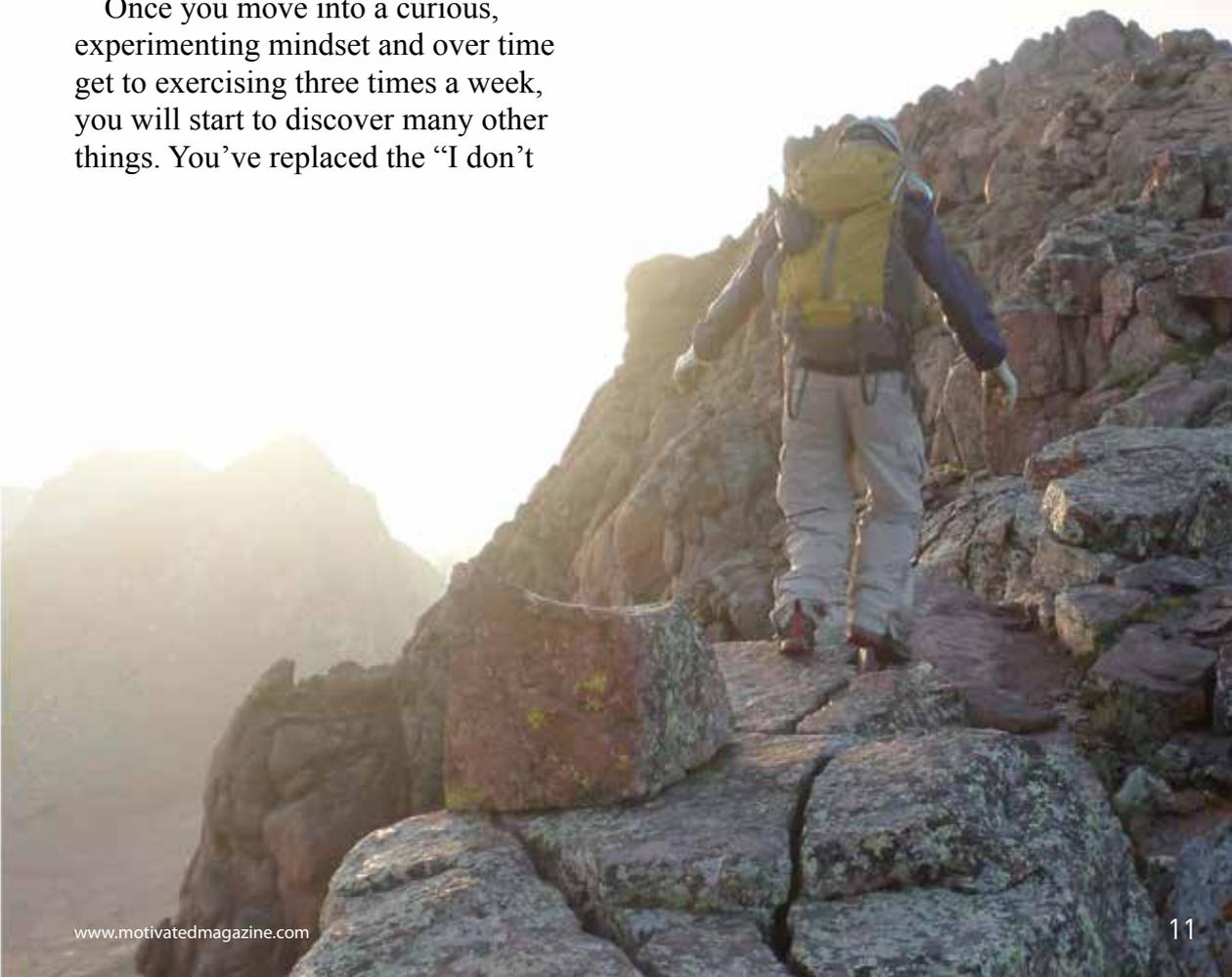
Another thought might be, “I will eat and drink less on Friday and Saturday nights and wake up energetic for a 30-minute workout on Saturday and Sunday mornings.”

Once you move into a curious, experimenting mindset and over time get to exercising three times a week, you will start to discover many other things. You’ve replaced the “I don’t

have time” thought with “I’m sleeping better so I’m less stressed at work and getting more done.” And you might find that your best ideas for solving intractable problems arrive out of the blue during your fast walks. Or that you’re more relaxed and focused in your conversations with your children.

By the time you’ve successfully completed the thought-shifting process, you can’t even imagine how you could have been stuck in the “I don’t have time” box you were just a few short months ago.

You’ve changed your mindset. You’re outside your box. Enjoy the new horizon. ♦





Happy New *Beginnings*

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.—Seneca

Begin today. Declare out loud to the universe that you are willing to let go of struggle and eager to learn through joy.—Sarah Ban Breathnach

Start wherever you are and start small.
—Rita Baily

Do not wait until the conditions are perfect to begin. Beginning makes the conditions perfect.—Alan Cohen

I have always been delighted at the prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start, with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning.
—J. B. Priestly

The secret to living the life of your dreams is to start living the life of your dreams today, in every little way you possibly can.—Mike Dooley

There are some things one can only achieve by a deliberate leap in the opposite direction.—Franz Kafka

You don't need endless time and perfect conditions. Do it now. Do it today. Do it for twenty minutes and watch your heart start beating.—Barbara Sher

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.
—Maria Robinson

Nothing is predestined. The obstacles of your past can become the gateways that lead to new beginnings.—Ralph Blum

Whatever you do or dream you can do—begin it. Boldness has genius and power and magic in it.
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Don't look further for answers: be the solution. You were born with everything you need to know. Make a promise to stop getting in the way of the blessing that you are. Take a deep breath, remember to have fun, and begin.
—Jonathan H. Ellerby