

Keeping Your New Year's Evolutions

Article by Alan Cohen from the January 2016 Daily Word® Magazine

Many of us make New Year's resolutions that, according to many surveys, don't last very long. Many are gone by the end of January, and most are gone by July. Most resolutions have to do with losing weight, saving money, and taking self-improvement courses. All worthy goals, to be sure. But why do most resolutions tank?

I was coaching a woman who was burdened by a terrible sense of overwhelm. She could not keep up with all the "should's" banging at her from inside her head, voices of her parents and other past authority figures. After listening to her painful litany, I told her, "There is no way you are ever going to succeed at keeping up with all of your self-imposed obligations."

"Why is that?"

"There is no joy, intention, or true choice in any of them. Your life is one big 'I have to.'"

"Then how do I change?"

"Shift from 'discipline' to 'blissipline,'" I suggested. "You will always succeed at things you choose because they make you happy. You will never succeed at things you do just because you owe."

There are, of course, things we have to do whether we like to or not. But there are other things we would love to do, but don't. When we take the time and self-honoring to do the things that fill our soul, the other stuff becomes easier, lighter, and in many cases the volume of distasteful activity miraculously diminishes. You can create a tipping point in favor of joyful activities by engaging from the heart rather than the head.

This year forget about your New Year's resolutions and pay more attention to your New Year's evolutions. Resolutions imply an imposition of will over joy; of forcing over allowing; of demanding over flowing. You are on a trajectory of awakening, healing, and self-expression, achieved by cultivating your true self and letting life live through you rather than marching into the black hole of endless obligation. Following bliss requires a leap of faith. You must trust your inner voice and act on it rather than falling prey to outer demands, internalized until you think they are your choices. But they are not. Your true choices proceed from love, not fear.

A fellow told me that he did not know what he should do with his life. “My ex-wife wants me to do one thing, my girlfriend another, my kids another, and my boss is pushing me in another direction. What do you think I should do?”

“What would you like to do?”

The man looked confused. “I don’t know. I never thought about that.”

“Take some time to answer that question. It will save your life.”

A few weeks later I received an email from the fellow, telling me that the question was the most important one anyone had ever asked him. When he got in touch with his true choices rather than the choices others were attempting to make for him, he discovered a path that would really work for him. He was grateful beyond words.

Your evolution is proceeding without flaw. All the experiences you have ever had have led you to where you now stand. Now all you have to do is honor what makes you happy more than your need to please or prove. You don’t have to wrestle your destiny to the ground like a big growling bear. Simply cooperate with what wants to happen. “May the Force be with you” is a twisted wish. A more accurate blessing would be, “May you be with the Force.” The Force is already with you. You just have to let it work on your behalf. Quit telling the universe how to run. It already knows.

At this point relaxation will yield you more effective results than more pressure. If adding more pressure to your life worked, you would be happier. If something you are doing isn’t working, doing more of it won’t work better. I’m not suggesting you be lazy or irresponsible. Ironically, acting from fear is the laziest and most irresponsible attitude, because actions that proceed from fear are non-productive. Actions that proceed from choice and joy bear results that will serve you and everyone you touch.

This year resolve to evolve. Goethe said, “When you trust yourself, you will know how to live.” He was echoing the advice of Buddha: “Now all that is left is for you to become yourself.” Let evolution take you where you want to go. The will of God is your own will. At a delicious point it all comes together.

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