



REVIEW
YOUR YEAR

As you end this year and make preparations to move into the New Year 2019, it is an excellent time to review, to contemplate and dwell on what you achieved and completed this year – it will affect how you enter the New Year. Many people love to plan a new year, to set goals. They become excited about what a new set of 12 months can bring. But in saying that, it is necessary to put on the brakes for a couple of days and give yourself the time and space to reflect on the past year. It is wonderful to make new starts and to dream big, clean out the cobwebs that developed over the year, and it makes it much more meaningful when we remember the bends and curves that we encountered on the road we are leaving behind and what they taught us. It is good to honor the past and celebrate all the joys you had, time to mourn the losses and thank God for the amazing fact of completing another year. Remember a whole year has passed by since the last one and you are older too. But are you wiser?

Reviewing the past



If you are wondering about reflection and wondering how you can ask yourself questions to find out how your past year went, here are a couple of questions to ask yourself:

- ◇ What was something very challenging that happened in this past year?
- ◇ What was the best thing that happened to you this past year?
- ◇ Was there an unexpected joy last year?
- ◇ What 3 words would describe this last year?
- ◇ Was there any obstacle that came your way unexpectedly?
- ◇ What was the best reading material you read this past year?
- ◇ Who did you spend time with that you count as really valuable time spent?
- ◇ Was there a real big personal change that happened from January to where you are now?
- ◇ Did you grow emotionally?

- ◇ Did you grow spiritually?
- ◇ Did you grow towards physical development?
- ◇ How were your relationships with others this past year – did you grow in relationships to people?
- ◇ Can you think of your most enjoyable moments at work this past year?
- ◇ What was your most challenging time at work?
- ◇ Was there a time this year you considered a real time waster?
- ◇ How do you think you best used your time this past year?
- ◇ What would be your biggest learning experience this past year?

Thing is, it is actually important to look back so that you can move forward confidently. The past year might have had its fill of happiness and success for you – many resolutions you made might have become a reality. Many of us come to the end of a year and we make the same old resolutions again – like ‘I must exercise more’, ‘I must lose 20 pounds’, ‘I must get down to eating more vegetables’, ‘I must reduce my stress’, and the list goes on and on. This is the exact time of the year when we do think about our future. We make plans, deciding that *this* New Year is going to be the different one – it’s this year that change must happen – we are going to turn things around. Sound familiar?

Don’t let history repeat itself



On the other hand, there are many of us who feel a kind of dread come upon us at the thought of the New Year. Maybe we weren't able to wrap the year up properly this year, so why should the New Year be any different? But you can – you can truly do something different. Before you make any resolutions, look back with a reflective mind and a keen eye. Transformation and transition go hand in hand with New Year

celebrations and these need to be grounded in the past 12 years of your life as you reflect on them. Can you remember what you planned for the New Year a year ago? If you did tell yourself you were going to lose weight, did you? Were you nicer to those people you said you were going to be nicer to? Are you thinner and slimmer after telling yourself you were going to lose those 20 pounds? A whole year has passed.

Many people enter their doctor's office at the start of a new year, often deflated, frustrated, and deflated. They look at where they failed, where they didn't reach their goals. Without an honest assessment of both your successes and failures, unfortunately the next year will just repeat itself.

It's about making personalized assessments and targeted strategies



It is an excellent idea to review your past year with its goals and resolutions to see where you made headway. Because making these resolutions actually involves a personalized assessment of your past year and a targeted strategy for the New Year. You can't just have an end goal. You need to have a method to get to the end goal. Here's a good strategy for you:

***** Start on January 1st and make a decision about one thing you can do to reach your goal. On January 2, find another step towards the goal. Continue doing this every day in January, every day making some change so that by the end of January you have 30 changes you have made. When February comes around, you have already been 30 days into making a big impact on making real and true resolutions that you are already working on *****

The thing that really counts is actually doing them and not trying to reach some distant goal. It is about achieving something every day. Start in the form of just small steps. Those small steps are likely to take you further than you might ever have dreamed. No matter what your career, no matter what your relationships are, no matter what habit – if you start in the morning and set the tone for the rest of the day, you are greatly helping yourself to make it a good day, even a great one, to set the tone for the week, the month, the year.

Look back before going forward



It is important to know that without looking at yourself in truth at who you really are, you will never get to where you want to be. That is knowing your weaknesses, it is knowing the loopholes and bumps where you are likely to trip and fall down and it's also knowing what the triggers are that make you do and choose some of the unhealthy choices time after time. Without that necessary understanding, you will find making change is ever so much harder; you will be less likely to get to that place where you want to be. It is the pitfalls and triggers that can recur and keep you in the rut, and you need to recognize them. But as you improve and go along, you will be better at catching them before they get you. Know yourself and review your past. Be honest, making plans and then carrying them out. And most importantly, believe and know that it is never too late to make real and positive lifestyle changes. Just do it! That means in 12 months' time, your resolutions you made for 2019 will be checked off in their tick boxes and be an important part of your life. That means Happy New Year for 2020! It's up to you!

Check out these tips to help you along:

1. *Don't try coming up with a perfect plan before you have even started.* Rather come up with a plan and then take action on it.
2. *Focus on what's really important to you* –Take that step forward as mentioned above, being the first step of your day, every day, when it is most likely you are feeling clearheaded and rested.
3. *Do one thing at a time to do your best* – No matter if it's at school, college, work, your personal life, because when you try and do several things all at once, you very often lead to mediocre results; half-finished stuff.
4. *Reduce the distractions* – Distractions are all around making it easy to get swept into them, getting stuck in the not so important stuff, even procrastinating.

By following the above hints, you are protecting your valuable time, your energy, and your focus during the days and weeks.

Some ways to achieve that:



- ✓ ***Put away your smartphone*** on silent mode whilst working, checking it only 1-2 times during your work day.
- ✓ ***Take 5-10 minutes to look at your inbox***, reducing the recurring ones that you haven't gotten to in the past 30 days. When you do a cleanup like this, unsubscribing to some email lists, you will see what a difference it makes during the year
- ✓ ***Keep reminders*** – just below your computer screen, listing your top and most important goals and focuses, getting the stuff that really matters done by taking the necessary steps.

- ✓ **Replace negative influences with positive ones.** What you let into the mind has a huge effect on what you think about, and what you do or don't do. It could be that there is someone in your life who is a negative influence on you or who drags your life down. Ask yourself what action you can take today to make positive changes, making a point to spend less time with the negative influences and more time with the positive ones. Come up with a small action plan to deal with it in a couple of easy steps, that you can take action on – see what a huge impact it can make on your life.
- ✓ **Exercise regularly.** Try and work out every day. Because the focus of this challenge is not only about getting stronger, but because of the positive mental benefits and to reduce stress. Make it a natural habit.



- ✓ **Accept what is.** For instance, if you are truly not in the best physical shape you were 2 years back, accept that this is what it is now. Try and not to deflect or push it away because then it just persists, taking up your attention which can cause worry, anxiety and negative emotions and behavior. Don't only look at your fitness levels like this; apply this in your relationships too. If you are in a negative place, accept it first. Once you've accepted it, it will give you the clarity to direct all your mental energies towards making those changes, positively.
- ✓ **Take a break every day to reboot the mind** – For instance in the mornings when your mind is still 'empty' and rested. When you think clearly, it's like making a fresh, new start. As the day goes on, the mind gets filled with events, feeling and thoughts, and you become tired and less easy to think. When this happens, take a break, sit in a comfy chair and close your eyes. Try and really relax the body for a couple of minutes, focus on your breathing, and then open your eyes.

Your mind feels nice and clear again, like in the mornings, and you are back in the present moment instead of getting snagged into all the mental cobwebs. With a refreshed, rebooted mind, the rest of your day can become smoother with less stress and tensions, able to focus again.

- ✓ **Ask yourself questions that set you free** – This opens your mind to positive possibilities, setting you free to do what you want. If fear is holding you back from doing something, ask yourself a question, like – What is the worst thing that could happen? Then make a small plan how you plan to bounce back so you can find clarity and to reduce the fear. For instance, if you dream of doing something, and you think it's something to wait for, maybe a couple of years, or a decade maybe, then question yourself here too – How can I take a small step towards that dream *today*, not in the future? Then quite often, you might discover that you don't even have to wait to get started. You just might start writing the book or going on that cruise or a dream holiday or starting that small business. Don't let your dreams be just that – daydreams, by putting imaginary obstacles in your mind. Instead, start with that first small step towards it, taking action on it today. See how liberating that feels!



- ✓ **Do the opposite in a common situation in your life** – For instance, we all have those negative patterns in our lives that seem to repeat over and over. To start 2019 on the right foot, choose to do the opposite of what you did this year, 2018, in some common situation in your life. What do we mean by this? Well, for instance, choose to take the high road with someone who irritates you or angers you. Give kindness. Or eat some very healthy vegetable and exercise when you have a bad day rather than what you are used to; taking out junk food to handle the situation. Make choices that are contrary to the negative patterns you are used to following – do it once, and start breaking the habit or pattern.

- ✓ ***Be kind to yourself when stumbling*** – As you work towards what you want for 2019, there are going to be setbacks, maybe a couple more in the beginning. Then it might be tempting to beat up on yourself up, to motivate yourself to do better the next time. But that way of handling mistakes or failures can often be counterproductive because very often it leads to lower self-esteem, lower self-confidence and often just going down a spiral of inactivity and negative thoughts. Be kind to yourself so that you can be constructive. A failure does not make you a failure, it's just a temporary setback. Don't fall into the trap of treating yourself like you are a robot. You need time for a conscious recharging time too, relaxation, to mindfully look around you and be grateful.

No matter your age or the season, starting adding healthy habits to your life, day by day

1. **Put priority on maintaining good health habits and lifestyle**



Don't put off that that medical check-up, because remember that good health is the foundation of everything you do and achieve in life. It is important to get up and move. Even just walking around the park twice a week –find a routine that works for you, and stick to it.

2. **Develop an attitude of gratitude**

Be grateful for your good health, be thankful for all the wonderful things that come your way, because it literally has positives effect on your wellbeing and health. Counting your blessing is known to reduce depression and stress, lower the blood pressure and slow down the effect of aging.

3. **Make quality sleep a top priority**



You can't feel at your best when you are exhausted. There is plenty of scientific research to prove how sleep benefits your health, keeping the weight off, and reducing some risk factors such as heart disease and diabetes. Sleep also helps you to think properly and clearly too.

4. **Strengthen the positive social relationships**

There are dozens of studies to show that people who have good and satisfying relationships with friends and family are happier people with fewer health issues and they also generally live longer.

5. **Brighten someone else's life**

2 million people in a study from across the globe were asked what made them feel fulfilled – the answer most gave was “*giving*”. We as humans are biologically wired so that we can share with others. Feel-good neurotransmitters are released when we show goodness and kindness to others.

6. **Carry on learning to the end of your days**



Let this New Year be the year that you take up a challenge. Learning is important as we get older, as it sharpens the memory, giving our brain a regular workout and contributing to society.

It can be a Happy New Year!

When all is said and done, it is wise not to just stuff your review of the past year and your resolutions for the New Year into a drawer, just to forget about them. Remember, plans and resolutions become much more manageable if you take little steps, day by day – keeping it all simple. Each one of us is going to open a new book in 2019, a book which pages will be blank. It is up to us to put the words of our life in that book – the book of opportunity and the first chapter will be New Year's Day. Let the end of 2019 be a year that makes you satisfied, fulfilled, a book filled with pages of dreams fulfilled, memories made, positive changes made, because you took the time to reflect mindfully on the past year to make the right changes that propel you forward to do even greater things!