



NEW YEAR, OLD YOU

It's the beginning of a new year: the time for ambitious new year's resolutions and another opportunity to finally turn ourselves into new, improved, bigger, better, leaner and meaner versions of ourselves.

Or at least that's what we are led to believe.

The reality we all know is a little different.

Around the middle of January, most of us who firmly commit to one or several self-improvement projects on New Year's Day have started to fall off the wagon. Come February, most resolutions will have been quietly cast aside and we will have returned to being our familiar old selves. Until the next year.

I have not made any New Year's resolutions for years. The symbolism of January 1st has always been a bit lost on me. Don't get me wrong, I am a big fan of personal and professional development, of having clear goals, planning for success and following through step by step. And as a coach, it is my job to help others successfully do the same. But the belief that somehow, simply because we have turned a calendar page and write another year, we can become a better person overnight and magically stick to all those wonderful new habits that we have been struggling with for so long, seems rather unlikely and is bound to end in disappointment.

So how can we implement changes in our lives in a more meaningful and sustainable way?

First of all, by acknowledging that change is uncomfortable and hard work and that humans by nature aren't particularly good at it. Have you ever tried putting your watch on the opposite arm? Even the tiniest and most insignificant change can feel a little discombobulating. Try it, you'll see what I mean.

Now imagine what this means for bigger changes that require serious effort!

Change is easier when it is linked to our long-term vision of success

Seneca once said, "If one doesn't know what port one is sailing to no wind is favourable".

Sticking with the hard work and overcoming set-backs and periods of discomfort is easier when the change is directly linked to a bigger goal that is meaningful, inspiring and important to us and that's in line with our long-term vision of our future. Or in other words, we must have an idea of what port we are heading for (and why) to have the stamina and energy to work through the stormy times when winds are trying to blow us off course.

“I have not made any New Year's resolutions for years.”

“This year, start by taking a step back to get some clarity on what your long-term goals are before committing to any resolutions.”

So, this year, start by taking a step back and getting some clarity on what your long-term goals are before committing to any resolutions.

Getting clarity on our long-term goals

Grab a pen, paper, cup of tea and find yourself a quiet place where you will be undisturbed for a little while.

Start by visualising your preferred future and take some notes. The following questions will help you get started.

- ★ **What do you want your life to look like in three (five or ten) years' time?**
- ★ **What will be different? And what will be the same?**
- ★ **Where will you be? Are you living in the UK? Are you still in the same house? Have you moved on? What does your physical environment look like?**
- ★ **How are you spending your days, both at work and at home?**
 - What are you committed to?
 - What do you care about?
 - What kind of activities are taking up your time?
- ★ **Who do you spend your days with? Who's around you? Family, friends, colleagues? All of the above? What roles do they play in your vision of the future?**

- ★ **What impact are you having? On yourself? On the people around you? On your environment?**

The more vivid you can make your vision, the better, so add as many details as you like.

Only when you have a pretty good idea of what a good life in the future looks like for you, consider what you'll need to do to get there.

- ★ **What steps will you need to take to get closer to your vision of the future?**
- ★ **How do you want to get started?**
- ★ **What's the first milestone on your journey?**
- ★ **Who can help you along the way?**
- ★ **What concrete actions are you committing to? What's the smallest possible step you can take this week?**
- ★ **How will you hold yourself accountable?**

Start with small steps – but keep your long-term vision in mind

Working towards ambitious goals is hard work. It takes time and effort but most of all, it requires true intention and a plan as well as stamina to keep going when things get tough.

What it certainly doesn't need is a new calendar page.

I'm wishing you a happy and successful 2019, full of opportunities.



Karin Mueller is a certified executive development coach and the founder and director of Liebfrog Coaching. She offers a wide range of professional and career coaching and leadership development services to individuals and organisations. Based in London, she coaches in English and German. www.liebfrog.uk, karin@liebfrog.uk, Twitter: @liebfrog

