



Counselor's Corner

January/February 2018

A Mindful Guide to New Year's Resolutions

Ultimately, New Year's Resolutions are about growth and improvement. When we set goals for ourselves and create plans to reach those goals, we cultivate hope while incorporating health and joy into our lives. With mindfulness we can bring awareness to our habits and hold ourselves with compassion and kindness as we seek positive transformation. When instituting meaningful Resolutions for the New Year:

1. Consider Your Intentions.

The most common resolutions typically encompass valuable and healthy practices. But why are they *your* intentions? Honoring the personal meaning behind an action helps us maintain our resolve.

2. Focus on Process, Not Results.

The purpose of a resolution should be the **process** — the infinite present moments in which transformation will occur — rather than waiting for the single instance of its attainment.

3. Change Your Habit Loop.

Self-transformation begins with self-awareness. First, turn your attention to the habits that you would like to change, and *examine what sustains those habits*.

4. Be Kind to Yourself.

No matter what intentions or resolutions we set for ourselves, we will have days and weeks when we don't live up to our expectations. A fundamental lesson we learn through practicing mindfulness is that we are constantly **beginning again** — with each day and each breath, we experience a brief moment of awareness and an opportunity to resiliently guide ourselves back to our intentions and the object of our focus.

5. Choose a Word of the Year.

Find a word to encapsulate the feelings, attitudes, and behaviors you desire in the year ahead. Examples include *breathe, trust, dance, fly*. This word can guide your choices and actions — instead of setting firm expectations for yourself, you can ask if a particular behavior aligns with your word and your intentions.

In order to mindfully embrace any change, we must keep sight of our individual goals, while viewing obstacles and setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow. We may end up taking a slightly unplanned route to our destination, but we are always learning fundamental lessons along the way.

*Adapted from *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*

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