

"Ten Things You Can Do To Change Your Life", by Nancy M. Tabet, LMHC

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As we approach the end of yet another year, we commonly use this time to reflect on how we can better ourselves for the year 2001. Here are some resolutions you can really keep.

1. First, start with the basics. Eat well, sleep better, and nourish the soul a few minutes each day. Indulge in exercise by parking further from the door, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Have a family meal at least once a week. Think of simple ways you can better care for yourself and others.

2. Be more patient, less critical, more tolerant, less judgemental. Negativity breeds negativity, criticism begets criticism. For each time that you say something to yourself or another and regret it, put a quarter in a piggy bank. Over time, this will serve as a gentle reminder that "you are what you think." You may be surprised how many quarters accumulate. Tape a positive affirmation in a visible place for each quarter in the bank.

3. Put away the yardstick of comparison. Everytime you use it, invariably, you don't measure up. Whenever you are comparing yourself to others, you are sending yourself the message of "I'm not okay." Instead, put away the yardstick and learn self-acceptance. And look at yourself honestly. Write down a few things you would like to change about your behavior and enlist the help of friends and family.

4. Find an activity you are passionate about, then do it. When was the last time you felt any passion? Can't remember? Look at children at play--nothing distracts them. They don't look to gain permission to seek pleasure, they just do it. What would make you feel alive for a few minutes each day? Find it and just do it.

5. Take time to be someone other than your "major" self. This is a follow up to number 4. If we could divide up a circle into the major roles we play each day, there would be one major role which dominates. Sometimes that dominant role is all-consuming. Learn to challenge yourself to step outside that role for a few minutes each day. Give yourself permission to be your "other" self. Make an effort to be someone other than a caregiver or career person.

6. Take risks. Always wanted to go whitewater rafting? Write a book? Take a computer course? Travel? Learn a new language? These are adventures which are more likely to enthuse us than any of the traditional New Year's resolutions.

Write down key events you want to experience during the next year and discuss/plan on how to accomplish them. Doing so will only empower you to accomplish less enthusiastic goals.

7. Show love. Self-acceptance begins when those who love us cherish our differences. Parents can praise children's unique--but positive characteristics.

Self love begins the same way. Each day, praise and acknowledge your own uniqueness, as well as the individuality of those around you.

8. Reach out when you don't have to. In *Winnie the Pooh*, author A.A. Milne writes, "Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. 'Pooh?', he whispered. 'Yes, Piglet?' 'Nothing,' said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw, 'I just wanted to be sure of you.' "

Imagine the impact of calling your child just because you want to be "sure" of him or her. No reprimand, no chore to do, a "just because" call. Of course, the same holds true for family and friends.

9. If you don't like something about your life, change it, or change your mind about it. Our perceptions change our life experiences. If you don't like your job, find another job, or change your attitude about it. While we may not admit it, we author our own thoughts.

If leaving a job or relationship, or making a situational change is the answer, then set small achievable daily goals, (I will work on my resume for 15 minutes today, etc) towards this change.

10. Change is difficult. Therefore, appreciate any movement you make. Know that if you've set a goal of doing something for 15 minutes, then you've changed your familiar world by 15 minutes.

The key to succeeding is setting small, achievable goals. Look at here, envision there, and then go s-l-o-w-l-y but successfully towards that vision. You will feel more effective and productive in your endeavors. Reward your efforts with praise and recognition--loudly!!