

MAKE IT A GOAL TO MAKE RESOLUTIONS!

By Sue Dickinson

I don't think anyone can go through a New Year's Eve without at least considering setting some "New Year's Resolutions". You know the standard resolutions: lose weight, make more money, spend less money, exercise. So many people make resolutions, but so often they are forgotten like Christmas tree tinsel by mid-January. Why?

I have come to the conclusion that New Year's Resolutions don't work, because people don't understand what they are meant to be. Frankly, neither did I until I started doing some research into what resolutions were and why they weren't working for me. The answer, as it often does, was found in my trusty dictionary:

Resolution: 1. The act or process of reducing to simpler form.
 2. a formal expression of opinion, will or intent.
 3. To resolve.

Well, since that didn't really answer things for me, I checked out the definition for Resolve:

Resolve: 1. to reduce a problem into simple elements.
 2. to deal with successfully.
 3. To find an answer to.
 4. To make clear or understandable.

Frankly, after viewing the above definitions, I was starting to get the idea that most people (myself included) never actually MAKE New Year's Resolutions, which by definition seem to be short term plans for achieving something big. Instead, we make large, vague statements of what we would "like" some day: Lose weight, exercise more, make money. But no specific action plan to make it all happen. So, when we get tired because the baby is keeping us up at night or we are caught up in year end closings at work, all our good intent goes right out the window....along with our "resolutions".

Goal: The end toward which effort is directed; Aim.

We have been focused in the past few months on the whys and wheres for setting our goals and reaching our "destiny". When reviewing the actual definition of "goal" it occurred to me that a goal is really what we are setting on New Year's Eve rather than a resolution. And that goal will never be achieved if we leave it at that. Because "real life" will get in the way. And, since we can't see positive results in the short term, when "real life" interrupts, we lose momentum and our drive to achieve the goal. But, if we make the effort this New Year to examine our lives, set some goals, and then make resolutions to achieve the goals, one step at a time, it might actually work for a change! How exciting!

Here is an example of what I am talking about. One of the things I have always wanted to do is to write a book. I have started one several times, but it never amounts to anything. But, I have decided that 2003 is the year. But that is such a huge goal, that although it might seem possible on January 1, it is likely that by January 31 I will have thought of a hundred different reasons why it can't happen, most of them involving my complete lack of time!

But, if it is my Goal to write a book in 2003, what I really should be doing is to set Resolutions that will get me there. For instance, a book is about 12 chapters long, and about 6000-7000 words per chapter. So, if I resolve to write one chapter a month, that breaks down to about 1500 words a week. I CAN DO THAT! And, even better, I can measure my progress and adjust as I go along. So, if "real life" gets in the way, it won't completely derail me if I'm prepared to evaluate and adjust the resolutions to achieve my goal.

So, I am finally starting to see that New Year's Resolutions aren't meant to make my life more difficult! As the definition clearly indicates, to "resolve" is really to "simplify", to break our desires down into portions we can tolerate, and achieve.

That doesn't mean it's going to be easy, of course. To be honest, most of the stuff in life that ends up being worthwhile isn't very easy (take pregnancy and childbirth, for example). But, I would suggest that it IS a process that we can all achieve. As Ben Stein (writer, politician, comedian) said, "The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: decide what you want." After that, it is a matter of making those things a must, and setting a series of resolutions to achieve them. This CAN be the year! Let's do it, together. Let's make it a goal to make the right resolutions this year!

Sue Dickinson publishes the Unlimited Mom Newsletter, a newsletter dedicated to helping working moms recognize and value all facets of their lives...their families, their work and their personal development. Visit <http://www.unlimitedmom.com> for more information.