

Working Solutions

What is the Meaning of New Years?

The meaning of most holidays is clear: Valentine's Day celebrates romance; July Fourth, independence; Thanksgiving, productivity; Christmas, good will toward men. The meaning of New Year's Day—the world's most celebrated holiday—is not so clear.

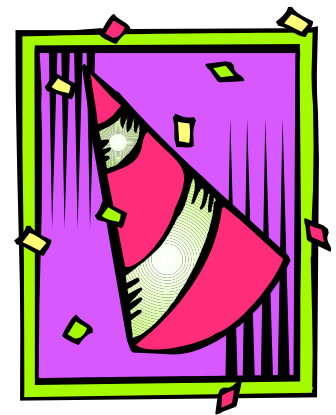
On this day, many people remember last year's achievements and failures and look forward to the promise of a new year, of a new beginning. But this celebration and reflection is the result of more than an accident of the calendar. New Year's has a deeper significance. What is it?

On New Year's Day, when the singing, fireworks and champagne toasts are over, many of us become more serious about life. We take stock and plan new courses of action to better our lives. This is best seen in one of the most popular customs and the key to the meaning of New Year's: making resolutions.

On average, each American makes 1.8 New Year's resolutions. When the rest of the world is taken into account, the number of people making resolutions skyrockets to hundreds of millions. From New York to Paris to Sydney, interesting similarities arise as shown in two very common resolutions: people wanting to be more attractive by losing weight, and to be healthier by exercising more and smoking less. They want to do things better, become better people.

New Year's Day is the most active-minded holiday, because it is the one where people evaluate their lives and plans and resolve to take action. One dramatic example of taking resolutions seriously is the old European custom of: "What one does on this day, one will do for the rest of the year." What unites this custom and

(Continued on the next page.)



“On the first day of the year, people take their values more seriously”

the more common type of resolutions is that on the first day of the year people take their values more seriously.

Values are not only physical and external; they also can be psychological. Many New Year's resolutions reveal that people want to better themselves by improving psychologically. For example, look at your own resolutions over the years. Haven't they included such vows as: be more patient with your children, improve your self-esteem, and be more emotionally open with your partner? Such resolutions express the moral ambitiousness of a person wanting to improve his self and life.

What then is the philosophic meaning of New Year's resolutions? Every resolution you make on this day implies that you are in control of your self, that you are not a victim fated by circumstance, controlled by stars, owned by luck, but that you are an individual who can make choices to change your life. You can learn statistics, ask for that promotion, fight your shyness, or search for that marriage partner. Your life is in your own hands.

But what is the purpose of making such goals and resolutions? Why bother? Making New Year's resolutions (and doing so even after failing last year's) stresses that people want to be happy. On New Year's Day many people accept, often more implicitly than explicitly, that happiness comes from the achievement of values. That is why you resolve to be healthier, more ambitious, and more confident. You want to enjoy that sense of purpose, accomplishment and pleasure that one feels when achieving values. It is happiness that is the motor and purpose of one's life. It is New Year's, more than any other day that makes the attainment of happiness more real and possible. This is the meaning of New Year's Day and why it is so psychologically important and significant to people throughout the world. If people were to apply the value-achievement meaning of New Year's Day explicitly and consistently 365 days each year, they would be happier.

So every day, fill your champagne glass of life to the brim with values, and drink deep to your life and the joy that it can and should be.

Happy New Year. Happy life.

▪ *Scott McConnell is director of communications of the Ayn Rand Institute in Irvine, California. The Institute promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

Creating Your Resolution List

New Year's is the only holiday that celebrates the passage of time. Perhaps that's why, as the final seconds of this year tick away, we become introspective. Inevitably, that introspection turns to thoughts of self-improvement and the annual ritual of making New Year's Resolutions. New Year's Resolutions offer the first of many important tools for remaking ourselves.

People the world over make New Year's Resolutions. Often, what we vow to improve is some habit related to health, weight, exercise, occupation and income. You may think your successes or failures in this department are of no interest to the world at large. Not true. In fact, a whole branch of science, psychology, is devoted to behavior modification.

Write down your list of New Year's Resolutions. Get them all out of your head and down on paper.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Focus, Focus, Focus!

Does one resolution stand out? Is it one that you are ready to go after? Focus on this one; you can replicate the process later.

My #1 Resolution is: _____

Congratulations on your decision. This focus is critical to moving forward.

Resolution Validation

Next, validate your chosen resolution's importance. For each question below, ask yourself if you're getting a green—go, yellow—caution, or red—stop signal. If a caution or stop signal pops into your head, stop to ask why. It might mean that this resolution isn't the right one to be focusing on. The validation test will keep you motivated as you continue on your resolution road trip. If the validation questions show you that this is the wrong resolution for now, start over. Return to your original list, and work through the process once again. It is wiser to focus on the right resolution than to start one you're not committed to. Write down what comes to mind as you read through each question. These notes will serve as a motivational tool for you when you are in the middle of your resolution plan.

Is This Resolution Part of My Personal Mission?

Does this resolution align with my mission? How?

How does this resolution align with my values?

How will this resolution bring me closer to living my mission?

Is This Resolution Really Me?

Is this resolution authentic?

Can I envision myself accomplishing this goal?

Is it a habit that I can incorporate into my life?

Am I The Owner of This Resolution?

Is this MY goal?

How can I take complete ownership of this resolution? _____

Is This Resolution In My Control?

Is this a resolution I can actually achieve?

Is it within my control or someone else's?

What do I control about this resolution?

What do I not control?

How Will This Resolution Stretch Me?

Is this a resolution that will make me grow?

How will it help me learn new things?

By investing your efforts in each of the five stages that lead to successful resolutions, you give yourself a launch pad for starting your new year and your new life.

I wish for you a New Year of health, wealth, and happiness. Make it a year in which you give yourself many gifts, to include the gifts of love, patience, and faith. I encourage you to pursue your resolutions with open arms and to believe deeply in your ability to enjoy the rewards of resolutions and dreams achieved.

Everything Counts! Source: LifeLinesWnter05

Depression Can Discount Your Retirement

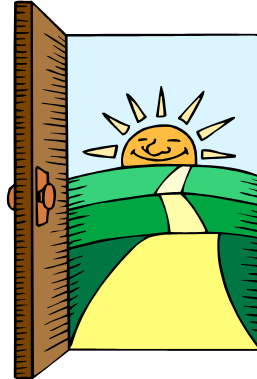
Major depression is a highly treatable illness. Unfortunately, most people who suffer with it will wait years before seeing a doctor and agreeing to



try medication and/or counseling to treat it. Don't let that happen to you, especially if you are feeling the urge to retire because of depression's effects on your productivity and attendance. Seek treatment first. Recent research indicates that depression can get worse and that people with depression are 40 percent more likely to retire prematurely. Go for treatment before going out the door. ■ *Source: Psychiatric News, Nov. 2, 2007*

Can Gratitude Pay Off?

If family dysfunction exists in your home, are there still plenty of positive things about your family relationships? If your job is stressful, are there coworkers you really do admire and enjoy? Is your health fairly good? These are all anchors for practicing gratitude. We live in a culture that places great emphasis on getting rid of problems. The promise is, focus hard on the problems and happiness will be revealed. But there's another approach encouraging people to focus on gratitude finding what to appreciate and feeling thankful for it. The strategy suggests that achieving more and finding solutions to life's problems are more swiftly accomplished when we expect good things to come to us. There's nothing new about the strategy, but what is getting attention is how this happens when we practice experiencing gratitude. In other words, when the switch "turns on," the things we want begin to flow toward us. The gratitude approach to life improvement is not about fooling ourselves into thinking our problems don't exist. Instead, feeling grateful



nourishes us, prepares us, and facilitates our ability to spot opportunities and solutions as they present themselves. We are less likely to overlook or dismiss the knock at our door. This approach also energizes and creates excitement about the future. Would the gratitude approach be a useful switch for you? ■



Sexual Harassment: It's More Than You Think

Sexual harassment is a serious, legally costly, and emotionally damaging behavior that can occur in any workplace. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, approximately 85 percent of victims of sexual harassment are women and 15 percent are men. Many types of behavior other than inappropriate comments or touching of another person may constitute sexual harassment. Some behaviors considered sexual harassment might be based on no sexual interest in the other person. Examples include asking questions about a person's sexual activities over the weekend, making jokes of a sexual nature, praising a person's physical attributes, suggesting that someone is attractive and shouldn't have trouble getting a date, and discussing sexual matters within earshot of others. A key to preventing sexual harassment is recognizing and avoiding behaviors that can be considered sexual harassment, combined with stopping any behavior that another employee says is offensive or unwanted and then not doing it again. ■

4

Your EAP is designed to help you deal with life stresses and a variety of personal challenges. For confidential services offered at no cost to all employees and their families, please call:

Alliance
work partners

Toll Free (800) 343-3822
TDD (800) 448-1823
Teen Line (800) 334-8336 (TEEN)
E-mail: eap@alliancewp.com
Web: www.alliancewp.com

Alliance Work Partners is a professional service of Workers Assistance Program, Inc.



Important Note: Information in Working Solutions is for general information only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. Call Alliance Work Partners at 800-343-3822 for more information.