



New Year—New Outlook

Whew! We made it to 2018. Did it seem like 2017 went on forever? Or did your year go by too fast? Are you discouraged that you didn't achieve all that you wanted to in 2017? I don't know about you, but I'm happy to turn the calendar and have a clean start in the new year. Now's your opportunity to reevaluate and begin again, too.

Whatever your experience with this past year, the New Year holds the promise of a fresh outlook. Here are a few ways to renew, refresh, and regroup to make the most of 2018.

Forgive Your Failures. Your setbacks and failures do NOT define your success in the year ahead (or any year for that matter). How you respond to them does. If you mess up, press the reset button. Don't beat up on yourself. Okay, so maybe you didn't get to the gym like you'd planned. How about trying five minutes of stretching at home? Don't let your mishaps and setbacks affect you more than they should. Reflect on the lessons they hold, make adjustments accordingly, then get back in the saddle.

Lose Other People's Opinions. Quit worrying about trying to please everyone. When you give too much credence to other people's opinions, you end up running around trying to please everyone in every decision you make. That's a recipe for discontent. Stop doing it.

Learn Something New. Learning new things keeps your brain young and active. Make this year the one where you learn something new—a language, a dance routine, how to fix your computer, or to cook. Whether you take a course or even read a book, education is one of the easiest and most motivating resolutions to keep!

Do Something Scary. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Do one thing every day that scares you." Go skydiving or bungee jumping. Try an exotic meal. Ride a horse. Ski on that black diamond run. Constantly challenging ourselves by confronting our fears allows us to say yes to future opportunities. Learning that you can do something new helps to build your confidence.

Eliminate Wasteful Activities. One of the most common complaints I hear on why people fail to accomplish their goals is lack of time. But these are usually the same people who hit the snooze button nine times, watching hours of TV, or constantly check their e-mail or Facebook.

Doing relaxing activities is important, but it is easy to get carried away. If you're spending hours online, you have the free time to do something that moves you forward in your goals.

Narrow Your Efforts. Trying to do too many things at once can scatter your focus and make you feel as if you're just bouncing around, unsure of the best direction to take. Start with one major undertaking. Then, break that goal or project down into baby steps. This helps make a strong start, and is likely to result in a strong finish.

Look Forward. Buy sporting or theater tickets and display them prominently. I print out road trip directions, marking places to stop along the way. I get excited about lunch dates with friends and mark them in BIG BLOCK letters on the calendar. But my favorite is to get away for a night or two with my spouse at a great hotel, and have a romantic dinner and a wonderful massage. We don't go far or spend much, but I come back feeling like I've been a world away.

Keep Friends Close. Take a life inventory. How are your relationships with friends and family? How often do you laugh? Are you doing the things you love the most? Having a good friend to talk to, especially someone who can be honest with you, is priceless.

Change Your Perspective. Whenever I get tired of what I'm wearing, I immediately think I need new clothes. But then I reorganize my closet and realize I have more than enough options. I forget I have so much! In fact, I already have exactly what I need. I just need to look at things differently.

The New Year gives us an opportunity to become new ourselves. But it's easy to get caught up in that initial wave of enthusiasm, only to come crashing down when your efforts don't produce immediate and amazing results. Remember to focus on the process itself, and always try to be good to yourself. Just sayin'.

About the Author

Sharon Dillard is the award-winning CEO of Get A Grip Inc., a national franchise kitchen and bathroom resurfacing company based in Albuquerque.