

Setting New Year's Resolutions You're Likely to Meet

By Tiffany Meyer

I'm a big believer in the idea that we're all a work in progress. I also believe our family — whatever shape it comes in — can be an exceptional source of inspiration and support in our continued self-improvement. The beginning of a new year offers the opportunity to reflect and set goals for self-improvement. Resolutions can be a great motivator.

Most resolutions go by the wayside a few weeks into the new year because they fit a particular profile. If written on paper the resolution sounds more like a self-reprimand or a pie-in-the-sky daydream than a realistic goal. Here are a few examples:

- **I want to lose weight.** This is the resolution that packs gyms across the world for the first three weeks in January. Why doesn't it work? It's too general, making it difficult to visualize your end goal.
- **I want to spend more time with my family.** Great concept, right? But, again, it's very vague, which makes it's difficult to visualize. In addition, where does your family fit in to this resolution? Is this a shared goal?
- **I want to stop wasting money.** Sounds like a great idea, but what exactly defines "wasting money"? Is going out to dinner once a month with the family "wasting money"? Is cable television "wasting money"? The Nonviolent Communication process provides a great framework for creating new years resolutions in partnership with your family that are far more likely to be met.

Think of each resolution as a positive, future-action request you are making of yourself. Take the following steps to create resolutions that you're far more likely to achieve:

1. Reflect.

Take some time with paper and pencil in hand to reflect on the past year. Since 2009 in particular was exceptionally tough for many of us (due to the economy), I suggest dividing your paper into two columns, listed below:

- I want to celebrate _____. List and describe all of the big and small actions you and/or your family took in 2009 that stir positive feelings in you. Next to each, write down how you feel reflecting upon that celebration, and what needs were met in acting in this way.
- I want to mourn _____. Now, list and describe all of the big and small actions you and/or your family took or did not take in 2009 that stir negative or uncomfortable feelings in you. Next to each, write down how you feel reflecting upon that item, and what needs were not met in acting/not acting in this way.

2. Share your reflection with your family.

Talking through your celebrations and mournings together can be a powerful process. You're likely to discover some similarities in your lists. Additionally, mourning together

can create a space of power — opening up the possibility of shared commitment for different actions in the future.

3. Translate a mourning into a future action request.

Remember, the best resolutions are positive, future-action requests you're making of yourself. So, it's important to put your future action request in context of the needs it's likely to meet for you and/or your family. And, it's important to keep the request realistic and achievable.

Here's an example:

I want to mourn that I gained seven pounds in 2009, which puts me above my ideal weight. Last year was particularly stressful financially, and I fell into a pattern of emotional eating late in the evening, which is when I felt the most stressed.

When I consider my weight gain, I feel very disappointed in myself because I value a healthy lifestyle, and I know as I get older losing extra pounds is becoming harder and harder to achieve. I'm angry at myself for ignoring my own needs while I was stressed about providing for my family. The weight gain doesn't meet my needs for self-care, health, or balance.

I'm also disappointed that I didn't seek emotional support from my family during this time. Instead, I carried the stress inside, as I experienced self-judgment and embarrassment about my situation. I want to mourn that I isolated myself in times of emotional stress instead of seeking out support of people who love me. I want to better meet my needs for self-care, health, and balance in 2010.

To get there I have the following requests of myself:

In early January, I will request a close friend of mine to be my empathy buddy for 2010. On days when I'm feeling particularly stressed and tempted to eat in excess instead of seeking out support, I'll call him/her for empathy. I'd like to offer the same support to this friend in return.

I would like to lose seven pounds in early 2010, healthfully. I'll do this by not snacking past 8:00pm. And to avoid this temptation, I'll commit to reading after 8:00pm instead of snacking and watching television, or to call my empathy buddy whenever I need extra support.

Setting resolutions can absolutely be a positive experience. And, setting resolutions as a family can be a powerful tool to realize the support that's standing right in front of you. The NVC process provides a great framework for creating positive, future-action resolutions that you're most likely to achieve.

This week, get out the paper and pencil, and sit down with your family to realize your goals for self-growth this coming year. You'll be glad you did.

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