



January 2010 DG Counseling, Inc. Newsletter

The New Year: A time of rebirth and self-commitment By Matt Rome

"5...4, 3...2, 1!! HAPPY NEW YEAR!" An all-too familiar cheer will surely be echoed up and down the streets of New York's renowned Time Square and throughout the hallways of those throwing New Year's Eve house parties around the U.S. as the clock strikes midnight on Friday, January 1, 2010.

Fireworks will set the night sky ablaze with a symphony of colors in Sydney, Australia, and around the world a renewed sense of hope and commitment will resonate in the hearts of a great many people. This aforementioned scene is certainly not a hard one to predict - as this seems to be the customary sequence of events to transpire as every New Year is ushered in. Make no mistake, the dawning of a new decade and a new year is upon us, and this usually translates into a period of transition – a period of rebirth and a period of letting go. “In with the new and out with the old,” a wise man once said, and this sentiment certainly rings true as yet another phase of our lives comes to a close. There is no question that the New Year often spawns a whole new set of pressures and expectations to be encountered and conquered. For this reason, a brand new year can often equate to uncharted territory, and this can serve as a nerve-racking prospect for sure.



Sure, the notion of uncertainty in our lives can be frightening as all get-out; however, the kind of uncertainty in which the New Year often brings can lead us to re-evaluate our lives and priorities. If we are not entirely satisfied with the reflection we see or the seeds we have sown, it is most likely a time for rebirth in our lives. What do I mean by rebirth exactly? Well, good ole' Webster defines it as a “spiritual regeneration.” I like to think of this term as a renewal of self – a renewal of what one holds important and a renewal of how one wants to live his or her life. It is a transformation in approach or mindset this is most certainly true. That being said, it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind that a rebirth contains two phases: the thinking phase and the action phase. A rebirth cannot take place if one simply thinks up a rebirth without putting his thoughts into action! The behavior aspect serves as such a critical piece of this puzzle my friends. A classic example of one without the other (change in mind without change in action) is as follows:

An individual decides to achieve a healthy weight via incorporating a health-conscious diet and exercise regimen. He or she has the best of intentions in

making good on this new mindset. Unfortunately, this person just cannot manage to stay committed. For instance, their passion to exercise on a regular basis may fizzle out after a short couple of weeks or they may allow so-called convenience to undermine their healthy diet plans (i.e. "I don't have time to cook a healthy meal with my hectic schedule, and the drive-through at McDonald's is so much easier to incorporate into my day.")

Let's face it – we've all seen this happen to a loved one at least once. In all reality, it has probably happened to us personally. Lord knows that I have struggled with this very issue a time or two in my own life.

So with all of life's obstacles, how on earth can we possibly stay committed to our new year's resolutions and our intention to "re-birth" or revamp ourselves in a healthy and beneficial way? I am certainly glad you posed the question my friends, because the answer may be simpler than you initially think. Here are a few simple yet effective strategies that can aid in staying true to our goals for the New Year. For starters, let us discuss a topic known as positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement essentially has to do with rewarding oneself or rewarding someone else for a desired behavior. Implementing this tactic will be of the utmost importance in regards to staying on track with our resolutions or re-births over the long haul. I highly recommend that you set up a system of short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term "self-rewards" for sticking to self-pledges. Let us stick to the weight-loss/ healthy lifestyle theme shall we. A short-term reward for going to the gym and working out today could be allowing oneself an hour of allotted time later that night to watch his or her favorite TV show. An intermediate-term reward may entail going out to one's favorite restaurant with friends or a significant other on the condition that one has successfully completed a month's worth of his or her workout and diet regimen. A long-term reward may be to take a trip down to a beach locale somewhere after six months or longer of continued success in order to show off one's new physically fit shape. Having these different stages of rewards is critical simply because it does not delay gratification for a prolonged period of time. If we have no tangible product or incentive to show for our efforts after a significant amount of time passes, we can often fall into the mode of asking ourselves "what is the point?" It is also very important to bear in mind that these rewards should be tailored to activities you really enjoy – activities that you very much look forward to engaging in and not those you feel you should do. If you love to read then by all means incorporate that endeavor into your rewards system.

Next, having a support network in place can often have a HUGE impact on our follow-through and dedication to re-birth and resolution. This is

precisely why we should notify those close to us of our plans to re-invent ourselves and make healthy lifestyle changes. Let's face it; there are definitely times in our lives when nothing is more helpful than knowing the ones we care about are in our corners and cheering us on. In addition, there are many support groups available outside of our family and friends as well, and there is no shortage of resources for such groups to be found online. Sometimes it can be helpful to be around those who are going through similar experiences for certain. Knowing that we are not alone in our dreams, desires, and difficulties is a priceless thing. Furthermore, we must take it upon ourselves to recognize those factors in our environment that prevent us from making good on our self-promises and do our very best to minimize these. This may be hanging around negative-minded people, not getting enough rest or sleep, or having an excess of junk foods in the house. Again, these things will vary based on the individual and the resolution. A great way to go about discovering such items or environmental factors (ones that are within our control of course) that inhibit our success is to keep a journal or log. By doing this, we can recognize certain patterns in our behavior – what enhances our chances of a desired behavior and what diminishes our chances of a desired behavior.

In closing, may your new year bring about much happiness and fulfillment and may the wind be at your back more often than not. In staying committed to your goals for this new decade, it is critical that you give yourself a break when the road gets a little rough. Mistakes will happen, and we won't always be perfect one hundred percent of the time. This is simply a part of being human, and there are no two ways around it. If you simply do the best you can, then you have accomplished quite a lot indeed. Until next month, good luck and God bless. Happy New Year!

Any questions, concerns, comments? Please contact the DG Counseling, Inc. newsletter editor Matt Rome at e-mail address thomas84.matthew7@gmail.com

