

Happy New Year

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Have you made any resolutions to begin this new year? Will you be scrambling to buy the 'perfect' organizing tote box that will finally be the answer to all of your organizing dreams? How about the usual suspects like resolving to lose weight and get in shape, or resolving to drink less or quit smoking? (Does anyone actually still smoke?) If you haven't, or frankly even if you have, it's not too late to make some adaptations to your resolutions and the kinds of changes I propose might require that you have the steeliest resolve of all.

What SHOULD you resolve to do in 2023? How about ignoring all that silly pressure to 'do' or 'be' and resolving instead to simply be KIND.

Seriously, think about it. No one should even be thinking of resolutions until they are at least 30 years old, in my humble opinion. Kids should just be kids and teens have enough emotional and hormonal angst to deal with, without the added pressure of 'failing' at some arbitrary resolution that society dictates we make every January 1.

In your 20s you are building on your education, your career and maybe even your family and you are too busy to resolve to 'do better.' Then along come the 30s and 40s and with them perhaps an extra pound or 12, the kids keeping you too busy to spend enough time with your in-laws and maybe your house isn't quite as tidy as it used to be. 'I'm going to get more organized,' you scream into the void as you voraciously consume social media 'influencers' who show us all the 'right' ways to live our lives, parent our children AND stay fit, cook healthy and follow a 7-step cleansing routine every single night. You haven't changed, only your outlook has. The person you worked hard to become, the teen that worked through all that angst and the young adult that worked hard to succeed at their chosen career is still inside you. The person who loves their parents, or a treasured friend is still inside you. In other words - what makes you YOU is still within you and, unless you are a truly horrible, awful person, what about you needs to change that badly?

Don't let guilt be the arbiter of your conscience. Don't let that inner voice, guided by fear of not being whatever society's version of 'perfect' is this year, be the one that you listen to. Guilt is manufactured as a way of controlling or influencing your behaviour. Religions make you feel guilt. Mothers are the masters of guilt but so too is big business. If you feel guilty for not being perfectly organized or the perfect body size, or buying your kid the latest phone, there's a manufacturer that can sell you all manner of 'cures.' If you feel guilty because the neighbour next door takes her kids to 5 after school activities while you barely get to one on time, someone else on Facebook will then post a picture of their 'perfect' life just to make you feel doubly bad.

All of which is to simply say if you want to make a resolution, make one that is easy to succeed at and which will benefit us all. Simply resolve to be nice. Let's return to the common courtesy that existed (to some degree anyway) prior to the pandemic. I don't ever recall seeing a sign at a store prior to 2020 that said 'verbal or physical abuse of our employees will not be tolerated.' Silly debates about whether a man should hold open a door for a woman or vice versa are ridiculous 'hold the damn door open for whoever is behind you and/or who has their hands full. Say thank you when someone does it for you. Kindness costs you nothing. It makes you feel good inside and it makes the receiver smile and even if they don't, who cares? As the old saying goes, you have no idea what battles other people are privately waging and whether they respond to you with kindness in return or not, when you are kind there is a pretty good chance you've just helped make someone's day a little bit easier.

I acknowledge that we all could likely use a little bit of fine tuning, if for no other reason than to be healthy; emotionally, mentally and physically. My inner voice is often my own worst enemy. Arising from the arbitrary demand that we resolve to do better each January 1, however, is not the way we should go about making positive changes in our lives. As I said earlier, you worked darn hard to become who you are and that has to count for something. Why try so hard to change? By making just one simple resolution 'to be kind' you might find you are a whole lot kinder to yourself too and perhaps then realize, a change isn't really necessary after all.