

New Year, New You?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Many use the early part of a new year to make resolutions. Resolving to 'do better,' 'eat better,' to stop one thing, or to start another. Often, these so-called resolutions are doomed to fail, not because we aren't earnest enough, but rather, because we put too much pressure on ourselves not only to change, but to do so with a strict deadline in mind, often one that's not particularly realistic. Disillusionment and sometimes depression follows, as unmet goals come face to face with excuses. We see the new year as an opportunity for a 'do over.' To create a 'new' version of ourselves, but I've always had a problem with that. What's wrong with the old you? Are we all so bad at being ourselves that every January 1st a new and improved version is required? I don't think so.

Think about it. Perhaps it's never occurred to you to do anything other than jump on the new year bandwagon, resolving to lose a few pounds, get outside more often, to exercise, get more organized or learn a new skill. Objectively, of course, these are not bad things. Subjectively, however, it's an important distinction to make when you think about WHY you are resolving to make changes. If it's truly about self-improvement, for your own personal health and well-being, that's one thing, but don't forget big business (and so too, all those social media 'influencers') each have a lot to gain by pushing the narrative that we are not quite 'right' in some way, and you can bet they have a product to sell that will make us 'right,' 'better, faster, stronger,' in no time at all. I don't recall seeing too many ads for treadmills before the holidays, but like magic they pop up every year in January. You can't visit a big box store without tripping over boxes; the kind designed to make us want to store more stuff, more efficiently, in more spaces around our homes, and no doubt it was all stuff that was purchased in a big box store in the first place. I'm pretty certain all the self-storage places popping up all over town also have a vested interest in your 'desire' to get more organized.

On the other hand, more positively, if your goal is to learn something new (after all, self-improvement for the brain certainly isn't a bad thing) we were excited to learn recently that the Caledon Library has your back with Udemy, providing free access to educational tools across a wide spectrum of topics, all available through your library card. Udemy offers everything from a wide-range of personal development courses, to a series of hard skills content including certification courses that might help build not just your personal, but also your workplace credentials too.

If one of your goals before the holidays was to do some good for the community, and you were unable to make that happen, here's a way to do good, while getting something good in return.

Charitable organizations, due in part to the recent postal strike, have been granted the opportunity to continue collecting donations through February 28 of 2025, while still issuing tax receipts for 2024. According to The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs, 'Charities are at the heart of communities across Canada, lending a helping hand to those in need. This extension recognizes the impact that the Canada Post service disruption had on their fundraising campaigns, and will give charities additional time to receive and process donations so that they can continue their vital work.' It might not be a 'typical' new year's resolution, but it is a chance to help others without having to 'give up' anything in return.

Perhaps it's a little confusing that I'm kind of downplaying the importance of making resolutions then pointing out opportunities to resolve to do something! That's me, a typical Libra seeing both sides of every possible scenario. What it really boils down to is an exhortation to do what feels right for you, not because you 'should,' or because of the time of year, or because you think others might be watching or judging. Instead of vowing to make significant change, maybe just apply the principle of learning to live in moderation. We all still deserve 'good things,' even in January. Just maybe not a whole box of chocolates, or an entire bottle of wine all in one sitting. That was never a good idea, no matter the time of year.

Remember, we are each of us a compilation of every, single, life experience we have ever had - the good, the bad and the ugly. Each experience contributed to who and what we are today and that's no small thing! Perhaps you might be familiar with that old expression 'don't throw the baby out with the bath water'?

I think it applies here. The world doesn't need a whole new you. I'm sure there are plenty of people who love you, admire your great qualities or see you as a role model for any number of your personal attributes, whether at work, at home or in the community. So, if you resolve to do any kind of self-improvement, remember it's called self-improvement for a reason ? because it matters to you, not to anyone else. Many of us already think you are perfect just the way you are.