

New Year, New You
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As 2017 comes to an end – and before we get caught up in the encouragement of New Year’s resolutions and fresh starts – be careful to avoid the comparison trap. If you find you’re already caught up, as many people in today’s social media pressured society are, release yourself from its grasp! There’s an old saying in Alcoholics Anonymous that reads, “To thyself be true.” The purest marker of progress is not in your comparison with others. It exists in the comparison of your here and now compared to where you’ve come from and where you’ve been.

Be careful not to steer too far from comparisons. Measuring your abilities against someone else can certainly deliver a healthy boost to your self esteem. Better yet, looking up to someone’s accomplishments can add a rocket thruster to your desire for success. Be wary, though, of comparisons that leave you feeling arrogant and chronically cocky or inferior and chronically depressed. Thoughts such as “I am better than” and “I am not good enough” are strong indicators of when the grip of comparison is too tight.

Competitiveness is – in a celebrated way – a socially acceptable mode of comparison. Ask yourself this question, though: In the rat race of life, who are you really competing (or comparing) against?

There is a plethora of research and wisdom supporting how we can do well by being present in the moment, say 95% of the time. This sounds simple, but it is, in my opinion, our greatest hurdle today. It’s like we live in this widening pendulum swinging from complacency to comparison lit up by a strobe of flickering pressures, temptations, and distractions from past, present, and future orientations.

We learn through trial and error and, yes, some are further along than others. Before committing to 2018 New Year’s resolutions, recognize your comparison trap. Is your resolution based on failed attempts to make up for past failures, to become more like those you are not, or intended to prove something to someone else?

It makes sense that the past is meant to be visited to remember but also to forgive and the future is meant to dream in but also to plan. True it may be that being present is the key, accepting, and even forgiving, ourselves is often difficult to implement in our daily grind for “more.” Perhaps we would do well to acknowledge where we’ve come from and where we are, with acceptance and forgiveness, before gearing up for what we want to do.

One reason we fail at pursuing what we want (e.g. New Year’s Resolutions), is that we focus too much on comparing ourselves to others and on the problem than the solution. Consider this when formulating what you want this year:

- Access your resource. What do you have and what are you doing that’s already working for you?
- Say what you want; not what you don’t want.
- Forgive yourself. And when what you want is for others to forgive you, meet them where they are with “It’s ok, I was once like that too.”
- Focus on what you can do now. Let the past be the past.

- State what you want in realistic terms – be true to your current capabilities. You can no more base outcomes on someone else’s expectations than you can control that person’s reaction to the very outcomes you pursue.
- Avoid half-in, half-out language such as “maybe,” “kind of”, and “try.” You either “will” or “won’t.”
- Stay true to you. Outcomes not in sync with your inner wisdom and integrity are bound for failure.
- Remember why your outcome matters.
- Lastly, pass it on. You not only make progress having positive, future-oriented, present-implemented, self-initiated and realistic outcomes, you learn along the way too.

The most direct path to personal, developmental, progressive, self-enlightenment lies in having the humble acceptance that we have this life to live, that we are not perfect at it, and then choosing to make a difference. Where you are along your path is part of your unique experience of being alive – no one else’s. How will you dare to compare?

Match your compassion with your competition. Put an end to comparisons with others and start 2018 with the unification of the compassionate and competitive parts of yourself. Compare yourself only to the moments you’ve left behind and your unique ability to make a difference in the days to come. And this New Year’s Eve, let us shout out from every valley and mountain, “Watch out 2018, here I come!”

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