

Annual Review: Your Key to Improving Yourself

By Kathleen Barton

It's that time of year to reflect on the past year and look forward to the coming year. We all need time and space to step back from the day-to-day activity to reflect on our accomplishments, priorities and the direction of our life. Now is the perfect time to review your personal mission or vision and your goals from the past year, and then set some new goals.

Reflect and Review

Start by reflecting upon this past year. What were the highlights? The challenges? What did you learn? Maybe you had some financial challenges this year. What did you learn from the experience? Record your thoughts and observations.

Review your personal mission or vision. Your mission clarifies your values, and provides focus and direction. Ask yourself, "Am I living my mission?" If not, are you striving toward it? Review your mission to see if it still reflects your deepest values and priorities. Do you need to add to or modify it? Make any edits as necessary.

Next review your goals from this past year. How many of your goals did you actually achieve? What progress did you make? If you were unable to achieve a goal, what got in the way? Give yourself a pat on the back for what you've accomplished this year.

Looking Forward

Finally, set goals for the coming year. Set a goal for each of the significant areas in your life – for example, career, family, health/fitness, financial, relationships, etc. A goal is a desired end result. Write your goal using an action verb followed by an end result. For example, in the area of career: "Attain a promotion to a management position by the end of the year".

Your goal should be both specific and measurable. Answer the question, "How will I know I'm successful?" If your goal is to improve your health and fitness, how will you do it? Will you exercise regularly? What type of exercise? How will you measure your success? By weight loss? If so, how many pounds do you want to lose? Give it a deadline. Identify a specific date or timeframe (i.e., by year end, June 30th, or on a weekly or monthly basis). After all, a goal without a deadline is just a dream.

Finally, commit to your goals. Imagine how great you'll feel once you achieve your goals. Be sure to write them down. Research shows that those who write their goals are more likely to achieve them. Better yet, share your goals with someone who is close to you. By communicating your goals you'll be more accountable.

By completing your annual review you will feel the satisfaction of accomplishment, learn from your challenges, and continuously improve. Setting goals for the coming year will provide motivation and focus. With this process you can continuously improve your life.

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