

ORDER, BEAUTY, BALANCE

Resolutions: Resolved

Marin Rose

It's a new year and many of us are starting it with good intentions of becoming new and improved versions of ourselves. I'm no exception. I have just launched a new name and website for my company (we are now Libra Organizing) and have resolved to expand and enrich my online presence in the coming year, posting content-rich videos and offering additional resources to viewers. So, in solidarity with others who've committed to be better in 2014, I'm dedicating this column to the topic of effective goal setting.

It's easy to identify goals we'd like to achieve but harder to actually achieve them. That's why so many resolutions — to improve health, save money, reduce stress, increase quality family time, to be more present — are made and abandoned over and over again. Breaking that cycle requires organized thought and planning.

Motivation — The first step in ensuring that you'll be able to keep a resolution is making sure you're taking it on for the right reasons. Success reaching any worthwhile goal entails hard work, stamina and, usually, a little sacrifice, so if you're motivated by peer or societal pressure, or by others' expectations or wishes for you, you're almost guaranteed to fail. As much as they may try, others can't make us change. So choose a goal that is meaningful to you, that will bring you personal satisfaction.

Timing — Sometimes, though, even the changes we desperately wish to make elude us because it's simply not the right time to make them. Practical barriers are common but can usually be broken down. For instance, you might very much want to leave your job to start your own business. Financial demands might preclude you from taking that leap now but there are probably other ways in which you can work toward that goal. You might, for instance, start a new household budget program, learn from a mentor in the industry you hope to enter or build a portfolio by taking on a small job once a month or so.

The emotional barriers to reaching our goals are just as common as practical ones but they can be far more crippling. Despite our deepest desire to make a change, sometimes we just aren't ready to take the risk or commit to doing the work. Rather than resigning to the status quo — or, worse, perhaps — taking on the goal without a plan and then beating yourself up over the inevitable failure, take on a much smaller goal with the purpose of building confidence and gaining motivation. And if you're not ready, you're not ready. Commit to being patient with yourself, knowing you'll act when the time is right.

Specificity — If your goal this year is to “get organized,” I can practically promise you won't do it. Why? Because “getting organized” is an extremely broad objective. To make a change, you must identify exactly what change you desire. Is your priority to reduce clutter? Be more punctual? Cut down on email management time? Any and all of these goals are achievable because they're precise.

These examples are also viable resolutions because they depend solely on your behavior. Goals whose success rely on the behavior of others or on outcomes beyond your control are recipes for disappointment. It's within your power to apply for a job online every day but there's no guarantee that it will land you a position. You can exercise five times a week but that won't necessarily translate into a certain quantity of weight loss. Define your success by the journey rather than the result.

Planning — Though setting a goal might not be as easy as you thought, following through is, of course, always the bigger challenge. This is where an organized approach is critical.

Break down large or long-term goals into small chunks and schedule time to tackle them. Some people find inspirational quotes or images helpful. If you're one of them, these are appropriate to post on your mirror, refrigerator or computer monitor — any place where they'll motivate you. Reminder notes, on the other hand, are largely useless. Sticky notes or electronic reminders can be a nuisance and very quickly fade into the general atmosphere, unseen. If you're serious about calling your aunt each week, the best way to make it happen is to schedule a specific, practical time in your calendar along with all of the other activities and appointments you keep.

Especially in the beginning, be strict about honoring the appointments you make in pursuit of your goals, just as you would if they were appointments with a friend, colleague or doctor. That said, treat yourself with at least the same amount of patience and understanding that you would someone else. Life, as we know, requires flexibility — especially life with children. Accept that sometimes our plans are thwarted and trust that the work will wait for you to pick it up again. And don't wait until December 31 to acknowledge your success. Celebrate the small milestones.

Feeling like you missed the boat on New Year's resolutions? Goal setting isn't just for January 1. If you're ready to make a change, start today. Or tomorrow. Or any time — as soon as you're ready to take on the challenge. It's always a great time to talk with kids about personal goals, and to demonstrate for them that hope, hard work — and good planning — are how dreams really do come true.

Questions for Marin? Send inquiries to info@libraorganizing.com.



Marin Rose owns *Libra Organizing*, an Augusta-based organizing, decorating and home staging business. Marin serves clients throughout the CSRA, as well as in her hometown of Washington, D.C., New York and beyond. For more information, including notices of free seminars and community events, visit libraorganizing.com.