

An End-of-Year Reflection Guide

These end-of-year reflections are organized by theme, designed to take you on an emotional journey that holds space for everything from grief and regret to gratitude and hope. For each theme, I offer many variations on a core question. There is no need to consider every question—just go with whichever questions feel important to you at this moment.

I usually do this reflection process in stages, one theme at a time, and sometimes over multiple days. I use a pen and notebook to reflect. I encourage you to write in response to whichever questions you choose, and also to go back and read what you wrote before moving on.

A year-in-review can be a deeply emotional process. Give yourself permission to shift to a different theme, take breaks, and spend the most time with the questions that you want to give your energy and attention to.

If you are looking for a less intense experience, pick just one theme to focus on. For example, the things that brought you joy, the things you are most proud of, or the ways you found strength and support you through the year.

You can do this process by yourself or with a friend, family member, partner, or community. I like to alternate between private reflection and writing, then sharing, then another round of private reflection based on what the sharing evoked.

You might also enjoy pairing this process with activities that help you take a bigger perspective, or that put you in a contemplative mood. For me, that includes going for a walk, practicing yoga, meditating, brewing a cup of tea, and looking through my previous year's calendar, notebooks, and photos. When I've done a similar year-in-review as part of a day-long retreat within a meditation community, mindful breaks between reflections are an important part of the process.

I hope that these reflections help you make sense of the past year and begin to imagine a positive future. May the time you spend remembering, appreciating, and learning from the past help you move forward with hope and courage.

What were the biggest losses, disappointments, and regrets of the past year?

What broke your heart this year?

Who or what do you miss?

What are you yearning for?

What mistakes, missteps, or setbacks do you want to learn from?

For the most important losses, what do you want to remember or honor?

What are you looking forward to in the coming year? What is a future memory you can imagine and cherish now?

What lessons do you want to take forward into 2021?

What actions are you committed to, to make the next year better for yourself or others?

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What are you proud of, or grateful to yourself for, from the past year?

What were the best decisions you made?

What accomplishment or activity are you most proud of?

When you look at how you got through the past year, what personal strengths, choices, or actions can you acknowledge and celebrate?

What is the story you'll be most proud to tell from 2020?

What photo or other memento from 2020 makes you smile? What photo or object tells a story about this year that you *want* to remember?

What changes, choices, or commitments do you want to carry forward into the next year?

What brought you joy, hope, or meaning this year?

What activities brought you joy, hope, or meaning this year?

What roles or relationships brought you joy, hope, or meaning this year?

What places or experiences brought you joy, hope, or meaning this year?

What communities or connections brought you joy, hope, or meaning this year?

What do you want to take away from this, as you imagine the coming year?

What do you want to give more of your energy and time to, in 2021?

Where did you find comfort, support, or strength this year?

How did you take care of yourself?

What practices or routines were most helpful?

Who were you able to count on?

What communities did you rely on?

Who needed you this year, and how did you show up for them?

Who could you reach out to and thank, for how they supported you this year?

How could you pay forward any support you are grateful for?

What could self-care or supportive community look like for you, in 2021? What is a step you want to take in this direction?

What do you hope for in 2021?

What do you want to experience?

How do you want to grow?

What do you want to learn, or explore?

What do you want to commit to?

How do you want to spend your time?

How will you celebrate?

A final reflection, one I often do after putting aside and then re-reading my 2020 reflections.

Imagine yourself doing this process again at the end of 2021.

What will you be most grateful to yourself for? What will you be most likely to celebrate?

What do you want to commit to, to put yourself on this path?

What's something you can do today that reflects this vision for your future self?