

NEW YEAR'S RESOLVE OR RELEASE?

By Kathryn Dixon

Most of us have our annual lists of New Year's resolutions written down somewhere. Or, if we weren't quite that diligent, our good intentions float around in our heads.]

But by the third week in January, for many people nothing much has changed.

What is this all about? Why is it so hard to make good, or even measurable, progress toward our deepest desires to be the best we can be in this world? After all, we only want to be loving, healthy and abundant. What gives, for heck's sake?

Consider this: Perhaps our focus on the desire to be "more" of any definition of "better" is actually the source of the very issue we are attempting to overcome. Maybe wanting to be "new and improved" brings my focus to my presumed characteristics of old, not good enough, and inadequate. Could it be possible that we already are the embodiment of the perfection we seek? In seeking to improve, do we inadvertently create a desert of desire in our psyche, thereby denying ourselves a garden of gratitude for the many countless gifts already possessed but hidden in the subconscious beneath our yearning for "better"?

"Balderdash!" I hear some of you mutter. "If I let go of wanting to be 'better' then I will never become all that I am intended to be." To this, I reply with a question: How has it been working so far?

Well, it may be balderdash, but then again, maybe it's not. Let's take a ride with The Work of Byron Katie and check it out. You will find more information at www.thework.org.

Let's use a generic and time-honored presumption which quickly spawns rabid New Year's resolutions -- a personal favorite of mine. I encourage you to answer the questions for yourself along with me, and experience what happens for you as you do. If this belief is not on your list, insert whatever is -- I need to make more money. I need to be a better parent or spouse. Any good intention you struggle over will do.

Belief: "I need to lose 20 pounds."

Question 1. Is it true?

Well, obviously it appears to be true. Like, hello! I certainly bear little resemblance to the models on the front of Cosmo or Playboy magazines, except that I too, have teeth. My personal trainer (if I had one) would agree, and so do all of the hundreds of diet books that have feverishly found their way into my life and now collect dust on my bookshelves. Even my mother, bless her heart, agrees -- and has been kind enough to tell me so since the age of 13. So, yes, I believe this is true -- everyone has been in agreement most of my life, including me.

Question 2. What do I get when I hold this belief?

I get to feel too fat, unhealthy, disgusting, lazy, unacceptable, unlovable. I treat me like I am flawed, like my body hates me, and like I am an insatiable and hopeless pig. I treat my body like it is not my friend, like it is treacherous and turns every calorie and carbohydrate into visible proof of my unlovability. I treat people like they are shallow and can't see my goodness and beauty when it is hidden in flab. I treat men like they are superficial, dangerous and definitely

not worth my time. I treat my mother like she's right, I hate her, and by God I'll measure up to her blasted standards one of these days if it kills me. I would treat my personal trainer like Satan Incarnate if I had one. I treat food like a necessary evil, never eating a morsel without calculating its horrific impending effects on the size and shape of my body.

Question 3. Can I see a reason to drop this belief? (And no one is asking me to drop it, merely; can I see a reason to drop it?)

Hell yes. Plenty of reasons to drop it! It causes great suffering, and yet, I still fear if I drop this belief, I'll gain 100 pounds for sure, and certainly will never be able to make my mother wrong. Er, I mean I will never be able to live a healthy life and be invited to be the cover girl of Senior Playboy or something. I also notice that every time I think the thought that I need to lose weight, it just hurts. That's a good reason, all by itself.

Question 4. Who would I be without this belief?

Well, much more relaxed, for starters. Not constantly waging war with my body, my food or my beloved mother. I would be kinder to myself when I look in the mirror -- instead of constantly assessing my blimp-status according to this belief, and I just might notice that I'm still rather cute, in spite of it all. I wouldn't feel like such a hopeless failure. I would just be rather cute Kathryn, who has a body that is full and soft and warm, and perfect for me exactly as it is now.

Men wouldn't appear so superficial or dangerous to me, because I wouldn't be judging them in such a superficial or dangerous way. I would feel more inner peace, and that would spill out naturally into all relationships in my world. I would eat with less judgment and more joy, which would likely aid digestion, and allow an experience of satiation that I never know when I am always "doing it wrong." Without the belief that I need to lose weight -- I feel lighter already. Interesting.

Now we're ready for the final gift of The Work -- Katie calls it the "Turn-Around." This is where we take the original statement or belief and turn it around every which way to see what treasures of truth might be hidden within it. The first way to do a turn-around is to switch it to the exact opposite of the original.

"I need to lose 20 pounds" becomes "I don't need to lose 20 pounds." Could that be yet truer? Will the world end if I don't lose 20 pounds? Probably not. Is world peace precluded if I never lose these 20 pounds? Nope. Is inner peace possible when I keep haranguing myself with the story that I need to lose 20 pounds? Definitely not. And, I hear that the peace on earth begins with me. In this story, I've been far from that.

Can I really know I'd be happier 20 pounds lighter? No. In fact, my life experience suggests that as soon as I'd lose the weight, I'd most likely just up the ante on my fretting about some other unfinished aspect of my life. Geez. And is it really so unlikely that there are men who can be interested in me exactly as my body appears right now? I can't know that either. And come to think about it, would I even want to be with any man who cares more about how I look than who I am inside? Clearly not. There was a time when I would habitually sacrifice my inner well-being for the sake of appearances (in fact many of my years have been quite literally devoted to that), but that gig is now threadbare and quickly becoming laughable, thank heaven.

Another turn-around would be, "My thinking needs to lose 20 pounds." Now that would really help! My body may be overweight according to the health charts, but I'll tell you, the stories I've been dragging around in my life about my body are far heavier and more debilitating than a soft little roll here and there. Eliminating the weight of my thinking actually excites me much more

than appearing in my senior years as some sort of post-menopausal Barbie.

A fear readily arises here for some, that if I drop the belief I need to lose weight that I'll just get heavier and heavier. Enter the question that calms all terrors if truly answered: Can I really know that that's true? No, I can't know that, either. What I do notice is that the more obsessed I am about my weight, the more weight I have to obsess about. The Work does not condone complacency, but on the contrary, condones consciousness which inspires action based on acceptance and love rather than aversive and fear-based motives. So count that silly fear quashed.

Am I suggesting you burn your list of New Year's resolutions? No. How you step into 2007 is 100% your own business. I know you are on your perfect path, and I wouldn't have it any other way. If this article inspires more self-compassion in your journey, then I am glad. If it doesn't, well, I'm still glad. I've learned that to argue with "what is" is utter futility.

I write to offer an alternative to effort, burden and struggle -- one that works for me without fail. Give it a try if it rings your bells. The only thing you have to lose is what you never really wanted in the first place -- suffering.

May Week 4 of the New Year find you in deep peace with yourself and your world.