



mindset

BY KAREN STEWART, MA

new year's resolutions

I am writing this on New Year's Day, 2011, but it won't be published for more than a month. By the time you read this, I am sure I will have "broken" my resolutions, maybe within the first 24 hours! Setting intentions is always good. Taking stock of our lives and thinking about what we want to change is important. The only problem with making New Year's resolutions is that when we don't meet them, we can feel like failures. The answer is not to stop making them, but to think about them differently.

I will inevitably fail again and again to meet my goals but in the "failing" is the learning. I easily forget what I really want. I slip back into old patterns like a comfortable shoe, without even being aware that I have done so. The important thing is that I become aware and can begin again.

Always we begin again. The hard thing is to begin again without judgment or criticality. Being human means lapsing; coming back into awareness is the gift. We grow stronger with each remembering. Learning anything involves practice, which means making mistakes and re-doing. When a child is learning to walk they fall down constantly. We don't chastise them for falling we cheer for the steps they took. We must have that same tender attitude towards ourselves, not criticizing ourselves for "falling" but applauding the steps that we make!

As I thought of New Year's resolutions this year, I found myself composing something based on the style of the Buddhist blessing: May all beings be happy. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free from suffering. I am deeply grateful for so many things that I often take for granted and I wish those things for everyone on this planet. I also want many more blessings for all of us. So I share the following with you and I look forward to remembering this in the year ahead. Happy New Year!

May I and all people everywhere

Have enough food, clean water and adequate shelter.

Have access to health care and education.

Live in freedom.

Live without the threat of war, persecution or other violence.

Be part of a loving community of family and friends.

Eat a healthy diet and get plenty of exercise and rest.

Find ample opportunities each day to laugh and play.

Be able to express our unique gifts and talents.

Have work that makes us feel needed and valued.

Pursue activities and passions that bring us comfort and joy.

Forgive others and let go of the past in order to be free and happy.

Deal with difficult feelings and inevitable hurts and sorrows in a healthy way.

Accept and cherish ourselves just as we are.

Keep our hearts open and loving.

Cherish our planet and all living things.

Be careful, kind and gentle with ourselves and others.

Find that deep and abiding peace and unity that lies within.

Live in the consciousness of who we really are and with awareness.

Remember that out time here is limited.

Live each day with gratitude and joy.

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Karen Stewart, MA, and David Stewart, PhD, are psychologists who work with individuals, couples, groups, and organizations in their Durham practice at Suite 220 at 811 Ninth Street in Durham.
Reach them at (919) 286-5051. Web address: www.stewartpsychologists.com