



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

For support on information on how to reach your goals USA.gov has some excellent resources.

<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/New-Years-Resolutions.shtml>

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New Year's Resolutions or Year 'Round Goals?

By Linda Jorgensen

January is my favorite month of the year. I enjoy the holidays and all the fuss that comes with them but once the Christmas decorations are put away, thank you notes written and the house put back to rights I find January to be a whole month of relative calm and time for catch up. After 3 months of holiday activities, parties and general hullabaloo the idea of no holiday to plan for a whole month is heaven.

During the first week in the year all sorts of lists of New Year's resolutions for special needs parents start popping up. I read many, some of them have been very inspiring, but I must admit that while I enjoy reading other's lists of goals and aspirations for the year I find most of the lists of goals to be way too long and some even a bit daunting. No way could I try that many resolutions all at once! In fact, I don't make any resolutions of my own, at all. January is my month for calm and catch up. Starting new goals all at once just doesn't work for me.

Don't get me wrong, I do have both short and long range goals and resolutions are good things but in my household many of my planned activities quite often must fall to second place to the immediate needs of our children. Some things just cannot wait until tomorrow. The list of things that must be set aside to take care of a child can sometimes be a long one. And that includes resolutions. When our children need us other things fall to the wayside. The key is to find the balance needed to ensure my personal needs are met, the needs of my spouse and my children are met and the rest of the household is taken care of, too. Making very short term goals as needed is much easier than trying to make a list of changes all at once. Resolutions are great for some but for some of us, small bites are better.

So, while I have the calm of January to enjoy I take time to look at how my long term goals are progressing. I start with simple short term goals to meet one new long term goal at a time. Do I need to change my short term goal in order to make better progress on my long term one? How is the household running? What needs do I have that are not being met? I keep a list and talk about it frequently with my husband if I need to, making changes as needed. Once I've got a handle on where I'm at with myself, my spouse, and the family and household the work continues.

"The Three Constants"

Goal making is a year round process for me with the exception of my Three Constants. These are the three principals I am constantly working on as they impact every aspect of my life. My relationships with my family, how I run my household, manage my time, and deal with all the fun and surprises that pop up on a constant basis.

It's what happens in daily life only a bit more often for those living in a special need household.

1. The first principal is "Be Flexible". Flexibility is essential when dealing with all of the demands, surprises and curveballs, little and big, that life throws at us. No beating ourselves up if we have to set something aside to deal with something else more important. Sometimes months will go by until things settle down enough to enable us to get back to other work. It is what it is. Be flexible. Once the main crisis is averted you can go back to what you were working on before or modify daily activities to meet your new circumstances. Family life does not always stay the same and that's perfectly acceptable. Be flexible.
2. The second principal is to know the difference between an inconvenience and a problem. A case of the sniffles is an inconvenience. A car that won't start is a problem. An inconvenience will go away of its own accord, generally within a day or two. A problem requires you take action, often immediately, and can really gum up the works. Knowing the difference between the two allows you to shrug off the inconvenience and take action regarding your problem. This falls back on principal number one. Be flexible. Don't sweat the inconvenience and get busy on your problem as soon as it pops up. Problems left unresolved only cause bigger problems.

Sometimes small problems can roll into bigger ones the longer they are left unresolved. Be flexible. Take action on your problems and don't sweat the inconveniences.

3. The third principal is to be persistently patient and have the wisdom to know when patience has ceased to be a virtue. This works really well with just about anything. Hospital billing offices, government agencies, school staffs, family problems, etc. For every problem you're working on be persistent and patient. Set yourself a course of action. Write it down if need be. Then set a deadline date for action to be taken by others you are working with and then patiently allow them to work the problem. If a solution or resolution hasn't been arrived at by the deadline agreed upon patience has ceased to be a virtue and it's time to take further action. Do you need to call in a supervisor or an administrator? Or is it time to file a formal complaint, a grievance or an appeal? Being persistent allows others to work on a problem and know you are patiently waiting for them to "get 'er done". Be sure to evaluate your expectations and ensure that what you expect from the other party involved is realistic. Nothing wastes time faster than expecting something to happen that realistically cannot be done.

Having unrealistic expectations brings frustration and discouragement. If you're flexible, have patience, do not expect everything right this minute, and persistently work the process you will not be disappointed.

