

WELCOME TO QUIET COURAGE - January 2009

The online newsletter for navigating life's changes and transitions from Bailey Coaching and Mary Ann Bailey, MC

Feature Article: Do Less and Be More

Happy New Year! Here we are at the beginning of another year and for many of us that means coming up with a list of New Year's resolutions.

Two of the most popular New Year's resolutions are to lose weight and get into better shape. This month tens of thousands of people across the country will flock to health clubs and gyms with the good intentions of making 2009 the year that they really will begin to take care of their bodies.

They will start strong; and then for many people, the reality of everyday life will begin to encroach on their goal of physical well-being. Their time becomes short. Their job becomes more demanding. Maybe the cost of the gym membership becomes a burden. Whatever the reason, their well-intentioned resolution begins to lose momentum and eventually fades away until it's resurrected again next year.

We live in a very fast -paced and highly demanding culture which makes it very difficult for us to add more activities to our already maxed-out schedule. That's one reason it is so hard to follow through on our New Year's resolutions.

Most of the resolutions we make involve making extra time in our day. Whether it's working out at the gym, taking a class or doing volunteer work, we need to find some extra time to make it happen.

If we are passionate about achieving our goal, we will probably find the time. However, if we aren't that passionate, or we are doing it because we think we should, it will be very easy to use the excuse, "I don't have enough time" as a way to weasel out of our commitment.

So, what if you honestly don't have the time, or you just don't want to add something new to your busy schedule right now; yet you still want to make some positive changes in your life this year. Is there something you do? Yes! You can begin to refocus your thinking from what you need to "do" to how you want to "be" in your life.

Some of the most powerful changes we can make in our lives involve changing how we are in the world. Instead of worrying about whether or not you are going to stick a diet so that you can fit into a smaller size, maybe it would be useful to focus on being less judgmental and kinder to yourself regardless of what size you wear.

Instead of worrying about working harder and producing more at your job, maybe it would be more rewarding to take a step back and focus on being more present and supportive of yourself and your co-workers.

And maybe instead of beating yourself up for all the things you are not doing, or not doing "right", it would be interesting to shift your focus to the good things that are happening around you - not in a Pollyannish way - but in recognizing the things you have in your life to be truly grateful for.

Most of us make resolutions to help us become more attractive, to be more successful, and to ultimately to make us feel better about ourselves. Yet, studies show that the gap between how much we achieve and how happy we are is widening every year. So, maybe "doing" is not the answer to joy and fulfillment, or at least not the total answer. Maybe we need to add extra ingredient of "being" to the mix.

This does not mean that you have to stop working toward goals or trying to be successful. It just means that you are more aware of "how" you are while you are working towards these objectives. Are you critical of your shortcomings? Are you judgmental of the things other people are doing "wrong"? Do you beat yourself up for not achieving all that you want? And if you do, does that actually inspire you to try harder?

Think about how your life might change if you shifted your focus from *doing* more to *being* more:

- Kind
- Compassionate
- Understanding
- Giving
- Accepting

What kinds of stress might that relieve? What benefits might you realize both personally and professionally? How might being nicer to yourself affect others in your life?

It doesn't take more time to be compassionate than it does to be judgmental. It doesn't cost more to be kind than to be angry. But the consequences are vastly different. Acceptance and understanding beget acceptance and understanding while criticism and anger beget criticism and anger. Which kind of space do you want to create in your life?

Life constantly gives us opportunities to do more, to work harder and to keep pushing ourselves toward that elusive goal of success. Most of us have pretty strong "doing" muscles. Maybe 2009 is the year we focus on developing our "being" muscles. Who knows how that might change our lives?

Until next time,
Mary Ann Bailey, MC

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