



After the Resolution

when the best of intentions come to naught

It was a wonderful night, a gathering of family and friends welcoming in the New Year together, linking hands to sing Auld Lang Syne. Some went "first-footing", visiting homes bearing a piece of coal to exchange for a warm welcome and perhaps a noggin, single malt if they were lucky. Others massed in city squares, strangers united as one, counting down the seconds to wish the world "Happy New Year". Elsewhere, on the stroke of midnight, usually sleepy streets echoed with the sounds of trumpets, car horns and sports rattles, brief drive-by reminders that the moment was something special.



After the party, when the cold light of day eventually seeped through the bleary haze, probably sometime in the afternoon for those suffering self-induced clowning injuries, there was a hard fact to face, a promise to honour. Made, perhaps, in a moment of weakness, even desperation, it was a personal resolution to do something better in future than had been done in the past; a determined effort to quit a bad habit, or address a failing. A new year, a fresh start - that was the intention, as it was for all the previous years. Unfortunately, the precedent of repeated failures had already been established. And how long did it take to recognise that the bar had been set too high, yet again - a week, two weeks...? It was pretty naive to believe those great expectations could have been met - they never had been before. Ah, well, there would be another chance in twelve months.

Surely it isn't necessary to wait that long, not unless this kind of promise should only be made and broken once a year. Might it not be wise to try again a month or two after the failed resolution, especially while the pain of disappointment still lingers? Much more than just endeavouring to make improvements to lifestyle in general, this is a matter of personal pride. Every achievement however small is a boost to self-respect; and it does need constant reinforcement. A slight dip such as this might not seem a big deal, and it doesn't have to be, provided something is done soon before the negative trend takes over. With the next first of January so far away, imagine the scope for personal shortcomings and the list of resolutions that will have to be made to put them right. So, my suggestion is: forget the month, ignore the day even; and begin another new year now, this very moment.

Take a step back to review your resolution and why you made it in the first place; then ask yourself: did I truthfully expect to see it through? If it was merely wishful thinking, there will be little regret for breaking a half-promise made with fingers crossed behind the back. What is essential now is to repair that lack of self-confidence. Think of something in your life that needs changing, preferably a minor aspect that won't be too difficult or time-consuming to remedy. That may seem petty and hardly worth the trouble, but you don't really want to bomb out on another resolution, not this close to the last dismal

effort. Maybe write down a few simple habits that annoy either you or a partner - leaving the cap off the toothpaste; failing to clean your shoes each day, or at all; using the bedroom floor as a laundry receptacle; conveniently avoiding taking the dog for a walk in the hopes that someone else will do it. I don't doubt each one of us could admit to some of these and many more. Whatever you choose, make sure it is small and realistically achievable.

How hard could it be to quit smoking just a bit, maybe cut out that first cigarette in the morning, the one that makes you cough and cough. Your day would have to be better without it. What about the last fag at night, the constant reminder that smoking is doing you no good whatsoever? Try this simple deprivation - two cancer sticks gone: not exactly worthy of a medal, but it's a start that can lead to better things. The same method can be used for alcohol - forget the wagon you always seem to fall off; just resist the first and last drinks. And if that means there's nothing in between - hey, think of the money you'll save! Was your New Year's resolution to get fitter? Make time for ten or fifteen minutes exercise each day. Drag yourself out of bed a bit earlier if you have to, or vacate the X-box and TV to compensate - they won't mind. Are you one of those people who's always late for work and appointments? Download our **planners**, write stuff on them, then don't just glance at them in passing, but make a concerted effort to action the reminders - presumably they were there for that reason?

I could go on and on, but there's little point if my readers have already shut down. I can understand that - for most, myself included, life has to go on regardless of the back-burner getting overcrowded. The human mind, however, can't forget the clutter of half-truths and broken promises simmering there. Important or not, they play havoc with self-esteem. Despite accepting that will-power is not our strong suit, because of these mini-failures we lose confidence in our ability to do anything right and properly to the best of our ability. So, re-affirming New Year resolutions at any time is a good thing, as long as we respect our own integrity and don't let the one person down who really needs a boost. I'm talking about you, me, us, everyone...

Let's stop being so slack. Let's get out there and make a few Mid-Year resolutions happen. Then, on the stroke of midnight next December we'll know what to do, how to do it and maybe, just maybe, the big one won't be a non-event as it has been the past few years.

Join the Resolution, folks, and start the year again; but do it right second time around.

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