



Seven steps to spending more time planning your life than planning your vacation

Perfect for birthdays and New Year resolutions. All you need to do is schedule at least an hour of your time, lock yourself in a room, the garage, go to a park, a coffee house. You'll need a pen and a journal. (Optional supplies: glass of wine, box of chocolate, etc.)

Step One

Think about the last year and write down the answers to these questions. Take some time but don't over-analyze. The first thing that comes into your head and your heart is probably what you should go with. No one will read this but you, so allow yourself some freedom. Also, make sure to look at all aspects of your life – (relationships, career, family, friends, home, health, finances, personal growth, spirituality, etc.)

When were you happiest?

What can you learn from that?

What were you most proud of?

When did you operate most powerfully?

What were you most grateful for?

What was your biggest success?

What was the toughest thing you handled?

What did you learn from that?

Step Two

Review any goals that you set for yourself and give yourself marks out of 10.

What helped you achieve your goals?

What held you back?

How has your success, or lack of it, affected your life?

(At this point, I always like to remind myself of this wonderful quote by Maya Angelou "You do what you know, and when you know better, you do better")

Step Three

Now think of an image or create a metaphor that describes how you feel about the last year – (I see a roller-coaster, I see myself on top of mountain, I see myself on top of a pile of trash, etc.)

Step Four

Write a letter to yourself with these 3 paragraphs:

1. Congratulate yourself for all you have achieved (pat yourself heartily on the back here, go all out, blow your own trumpet)
2. Forgive yourself for all your failures and mistakes
3. List the 5 things that are most important to you, and 5 of your greatest strengths

Step Five

It's time to be proactive and think about where you want to be in 12 months time – what do you want to have achieved? Who do you want to be? Is this the year for the trip to Hawaii? Draft your goals for the coming year – as many or as few as you wish.

Step Six

Use this checklist of questions to refine your goals.

- Does this goal really matter to me? (If you don't really want to get a promotion, or give up smoking, but think you should (or someone else thinks you should!), just let it go. Only put down here what your heart truly desires. What you're prepared to fight for. What you're prepared to hold yourself accountable for.)
- Does this goal excite me?
- Is the goal specific enough so that I'll know if I've achieved it or not?
- Is the goal realistic and achievable?
- Does the goal stretch me and challenge me in some way?

Step Seven

Lastly, think of an image or a metaphor that will represent for you what the next year will be. For example, this year I will be a butterfly. This year will be my Year of the Meercat.

OK – well done – that's some great work. And we all know that the best intentions go to rot if we don't do anything. My best advice is DO THIS WITH A BUDDY. Pass along this exercise to someone you can trust and whose support and conversation will help you get further than you can on your own. And then meet with them, or talk to them, to review the goals. It could be the first day of every month, every change of season, every time you fill the car up with gas. Ask each other:

How are you doing?

Are your goals still relevant?

What's working?

What isn't working?

What needs to change?

What support do you need from me, or others, to get where you want to go?

How much of a butterfly are you being this year?