



A New Year You Won't Regret

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Surveys of older people consistently find that if they regret something about their life, it is related to inaction rather than taking action and failing. People's top five regrets are usually related to: 1) not pursuing a relationship, 2) not resolving a conflict, 3) not obtaining a higher level education, 4) not leveraging their capabilities in their work, and 5) not making fitness a higher priority. In particular they regret not giving more attention to their family and health.

The reason many people have regrets of inaction comes down to habits. They are stuck in their rut of *busyness as usual*. They become anchored by their comfort zone. They don't get out of their routines to try something new. They aren't willing to endure a little discomfort, take the chance of looking foolish, or put themselves in a potentially adverse situation.

As you set goals and plan for the new year, don't let discomfort or fear hold you back. Consider what you would do if you had the courage to get out of your comfort zone and endure a little adversity. Think about what you might do that is bolder and more rewarding than merely another year of *busyness as usual*. Think about what you might accomplish that would provide a significant benefit to your health, family, or job.

Here are seven tips to boosting your courage and getting out of your comfortable routine:

1. Forget the past. Look forward. Accept yourself. You are not perfect and neither is anyone else. Don't worry about what others think. Don't let your ego get in the way. Be willing to look foolish and make a few mistakes. Don't wait until the perfect time or circumstance. It won't come.
2. Admit your fears and decide to confront them. The best actors, musicians, athletes, and speakers leverage their nervousness to become their best. Fear is okay. It pushes you to practice, prepare, plan, rehearse, and develop the mental fitness required to become your best.
3. Replace any negative thoughts and words with positive ones. Choose a *can-do* attitude over a *can't-do* one. Stop any complaining about what you don't have or can't do. Stop rationalizing bad habits. Replace excuses with actions.
4. Write down your goals in specific terms and in the future tense as if they already happened. State them in positive terms. If your goals are longer-term than one year, only focus on what you need to do in the coming year. You can focus on the following year's goals when the following year comes around.
5. Visualize yourself reaching your goals. Create a mental picture of yourself enjoying the benefits of achieving your goals. Write down the benefits you expect to experience. Get excited about making the investment in time, energy, and resource that will be required.
6. For each goal, write down the incremental actions needed to make them a reality. Write down the specific tasks you need to perform, the calls you need to make, the places you expect to go, the foods you will eat, the exercises you need to complete, or whatever it is you need to do.
7. Incorporate your new actions into your daily routine. Focus on completing your actions every day before allowing yourself to do something that is more convenient, fun, easy, comfortable, or urgent. Take it one day at a time. Don't worry about tomorrow's actions until tomorrow.

Make this new year your best year ever and one you won't regret.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.activatingyourambition.com), and president of Alpine Link Corporation (www.alpinelink.com), a consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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