

Resolving for a Meaningful New Year

By Dianne Flinn

New Year's Eve has always been a bittersweet night for me. It's traditionally an evening when friends and family members enthusiastically reveal their resolutions and share in the hope that next year will be even better than the one we are saying goodbye to. Magazines and TV specials mesmerize us with their glossy recap a whole year of trends, events (both happy and heartbreaking), triumphs, and the loss of celebrities and others who were in the spotlight for their contributions to the world. I, on the other hand, always fret that I failed to fulfill all my resolutions from December 31st of last year. I never completed that online class I started last summer. Knitting projects and quilts sat unfinished, the yarn and fabric collecting dust. My cell phone's storage was still full of pictures which never made it into photo albums. As the clock rapidly approached midnight, I hurriedly made a last-minute list of resolutions in my head, many of them recycled from the past few years. Would I finally be able to get everything on my list accomplished? Could next year be different than the others?

This year, my husband and I agreed to let our daughter stay up late to watch the famous crystal ball drop at the stroke of midnight. After all, this was a special night that only came around once a year. Yes, I broke my 2017 (and 2016) resolution of holding her to a strict bedtime. We snuggled on our cozy couch, sharing a pile of assorted blankets and bedspreads watching the excited crowd in New York brave sub-zero wind chills with the always funny Steve Harvey. When asked what their resolutions were for 2018, people's answers ranged from pursuing a college degree to making others smile. No one responded that they aspired to finally get that closet cleaned out or organize the piles of papers in their home

office. Those would certainly be good accomplishments, but were not inspiring enough to make it onto any television broadcast.

The revelers didn't come from all over the country, all over the world, and brave the frigid New York December evening, to divulge their aspirations of getting more stuff done. No, they wanted to use this opportunity to plead for world peace, kindness, equality. Hopefully those watching would put aside their "to do" lists and be inspired to share those dreams and find a way, however small, to contribute to the realization of a better world in 2018. And if the second week of January came around, and the doldrums of the gray winter set in and motivation waned, they could start anew and not wait another 11 months.

This year, I want to get organized and tie up many loose ends from last year. I plan on completing that course, stitching up that quilt and organizing those thousands of photos. But, I don't want to start the year off with just another long chore list. These tasks need to be part of larger, more meaningful resolutions in order to generate the motivation to actually follow through. How about resolving to be a better role model to younger generations through perseverance? Or educating myself so that I can contribute more to the world?

By the time 11:50 rolled around, it was clear that my daughter wasn't going to make it to midnight without interception from the adults in the living room. She lay bundled up in her favorite blanket on the couch, eyelids blinking, fighting to stay awake. A minute later, it was official -- sleep was the winner. I nudged my husband, shrugging, wordlessly questioning him if we should just let her sleep. After all, it wasn't right for a 7-year-old to be up so late, even on New Year's Eve. Instead of carrying her to bed, he gently shook her and exclaimed that she had to wake up; it was almost midnight! She rubbed her eyes, trying to make sense of what was unfolding on the TV. She sprang to her feet and finished the countdown

with the revelers in New York City...5,4,3,2,1 – Happy New Year! Then, seconds after “2018” flashed on the screen, we already had our first disappointment of the year. We had seen confetti and even fireworks...but, where was the ball? Did it drop? Was it too cold and it malfunctioned? Or did the three of us, tired from a long day, all somehow manage to miss it? After a moment of grumbling, my daughter, having sunk back into the couch, suddenly jumped up again. A brilliant idea had formed in her now sparkling eyes. The proverbial light bulb floated above her head. She ran to her bedroom, returning less than a minute later with a small orange ball. Without any need for explanation, we started the countdown again from ten. When my daughter dropped the ball on the floor from high in the air at “one”, I suddenly got a feeling that great things were going to happen in the new year. The rubber ball wasn’t encrusted with millions of crystals and weighed far less than the famous one. But seeing it drop had more meaning than if we had witnessed “the ball” make its descent exactly at midnight. 2018 was going to be an amazing year of innovation and bouncing back from disappointment.

Dianne Flinn lives with her husband and daughter in Chapel Hill. She has several years of experience in the healthcare industry and currently works on the Content team of an RTP software company that develops solutions for the health insurance industry.