

## Personal goals

### Chart a course for the new year

**S**eptember is traditionally the start of my New Year; a habit formed during my school days. It is the time when I take inventory and ask myself questions like: What's working in my life and what's not? Who and what makes me happy? Who or what steals my energy? What do I want to accomplish in the next 12 months? What kind of "investments" am I willing to make that will result in me becoming a better me at the end of the year?

This year was no exception. As a new school year was about to start for my daughter, I took the time to evaluate my life and my goals for the coming year. In the past, I've made the mistake of setting too many goals and then feeling overwhelmed. This year, I forced myself to pare my list down to four goals.

In order to make my final list, a goal had to meet the following criteria:

1. Be manageable – it couldn't consume my life and needed to fit in with my other responsibilities.
2. Make me a better person.
3. Be measurable – I need to be able to see/track my success.
4. Have fun!

So, here they are – the four areas that I am putting my focus on this year:

#### Simplify

Life moves quickly and things start to pile up. I needed to de-clutter, and I decided to start with my house. I've cleaned every room, closet, desk, bureau, and cabinet. Item by item I've asked, "Does it add value to my life or not?" If not, I have either given it to the Salvation Army or tossed it. I am working on the last bedroom closet and then, well, it will be time

to head downstairs to the big, ugly basement. UGH!

#### Beautify

I have repainted rooms, changed carpeting, bought new furniture and intentionally created empty space so that creativity, new ideas and experiences have ample room to germinate.

I love flowers, especially ones with intoxicating fragrances. Lilies are my favorite. I have potted plants or cut flowers

in almost every room of my house. They nurture my soul and make me smile.

While it's still a work in progress, my house is already more calming and nurturing. I now have several nice places to write. I've also created a special place for meditation.

#### Health

This fall was a difficult time for my family. Within a month, I'd lost 8 pounds. Over the course of the next six weeks, I gained it back. Ice cream Drumsticks were the culprit. It became a ritual for my daughter and me to have a Drumstick after dinner watching *The Cosby Show*. I should have read the label – 23 grams of fat in one cone! YIKES!!! That should be illegal. How can something so good be so



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#### RESOLUTIONS

bad? So, I switched to Ben & Jerry's Low Fat Cherry Garcia Frozen Yogurt. Unfortunately, the damage was done.

I decided to take corrective action.

Christmas week, I called a friend and asked if she would be my diet buddy. She'd been successful in losing 60 pounds and I needed to be accountable to someone other than myself. I lost two pounds that

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first week, and then I went to my mom's house. It's impossible to be disciplined at your mom's house. So our first weigh-in call started with, "OK, Ang, I'll go first. I need to fess up. I did well for three days, then not only did I fall off the wagon, I fell into a really, really big hole. But I'm back on track, starting now." We both laughed, and then she said, "Well, since your fessing up, I will too. It was a baaaaaad week." We laughed some more and then set our goals for the coming week. Ang is a special friend – she can kick my butt when I need it, or be a gentle coach.

#### Friends

Back in the fall, I re-evaluated my relationships. I realized that several people

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who I had always thought of as “a friend” really weren’t worthy of the title. They never called or kept in touch. When we met, our conversations were strictly about them – their challenges, their successes, their issues.

I asked myself, “Who do I really enjoy being with and why? Who do I miss when too much time passes by? How do I nurture these relationships?” In several situations, I realized that I hadn’t made the investment I should have. I made it a priority to reach out to these friends, and it’s been a blast!

Likewise, I had to ask myself, “Who steals my energy or who only responds when I make the effort?” I came up with a short list, just a few people, but I’ve decided that I will no longer take the initiative to connect. In my life, a friend is someone who shows the same interest in connecting with me that I do with them.

This doesn’t mean that I won’t be congenial if we bump into each other, but I won’t be spending any more energy on initiating contact.

Our lives are the sum total of the choices we make on a daily basis and the actions we take. Goal setting helps us chart the course. I am pleased to say that I can see and feel that for each of the four goals I set for this year, I have already made some progress and am beginning to reap the rewards.

What are your goals for 2009? I’m interested in hearing from you. Send me a note and let me know. You can reach me by clicking on the contact link at [www.christinemcmahon.com](http://www.christinemcmahon.com). ■

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