



Read that title again please. Yep, it doesn't say resolutions and yep, I know restrictions doesn't sound very "New Agey." Often times, it's not what you do, but knowing what NOT to do. After all, is uncertainty not worse than failure?

I've written before that I'm not a fan of resolutions. They seem to set us up to fall short. Ask any gym what February looks like in terms of the new members from December and January. In fact, do we not often hear people chuckle or watch them blush when they talk about their resolutions? Many of us probably already have an idea of our resolutions in mind by Thanksgiving, only to wait six weeks to enact any life changers. That's six weeks to build a sleepy winter torpor. Six weeks to build excuses. Six weeks to dread the cessation of what we've deemed naughty to become what we deem nice.

Let's start simple. Let's start with restricting our interactions to consist of love only. An ideal to strive for, to be certain. New Year's Resolutions are often ideals, so there.

A question to ask is why not start right away when you realize a change needs to occur? Where is your resolve? Perhaps there's a good reason for not starting right away, perhaps not. The point is, there's no hope for a better yesterday, no matter how much we dwell on it and long for it.

What's more loving than restricting expectations? In this example, we'll use a person, but it could easily fit a place or a thing. Have any of you ever put anybody on a pedestal? Ever

fallen in love with somebody's potential? Not just speaking of romantic love here, but relationships in general. Are you currently in a relationship with someone's potential? What's that like? Is it warm or are icy feet jamming into your backside while you're trying to sleep? Perhaps you see and don't dare care. I can't do anything about that, but I can tell you, from experience, it's neither fair to the adored one, nor the one placing ignorant, adoring rose petals at the adored subject's feet.

The touch-tones of why people touch you off will be there until they are no longer needed. They will continue to sound off until they are no longer required for your listening displeasure. If they're there past what we wish was their shelf-life, look around. Who needs them? Are you sure it's not you? Life is difficult, but we compound its difficulty level by becoming enamored with leveling up the "love" to mask or make up for perceived or real issues. Semantics, perhaps, but is the devil not in the details?

Resist the restriction of saying, "To hell with 2020! Hello, sexy, new '21! 21 shots, y'all?" How often has January 1st been truly different than December 1st or any other 1st of the month?

In practice, when you feel the inevitable resistance to the restrictions, relax and breathe into it. Resist the incessant, insistence to ignore, minimize, or breathe fire upon these little gremlins that only grow when you water them with ignorance. Observe the horror of your fright as you accept what is, then accept your fright. It happens to us all; we just lie about it until the lie is all we recall.

But Sutt, isn't all this counterintuitive? Is it mumbo jumbo? Search your feelings and you tell me. We don't think and feel in idealized ways, so why set up goals in that manner? Viscerally explained, these are the issues we ponder when we wish we could only elope to a peaceful night's sleep or deny via other outlets... New-Age-speak talks about shadow work, so let's shadow box, Peter Pan.

Back to restricting expectations: What is one thing we WILL definitely avoid by lowering or eliminating expectations? The big D, disappointment. There is a reason for sayings like, "Beware the injured golfer." I think back to years ago when I was to play a round of golf and woke up feeling horrible. For whatever reason, I couldn't not play, so I forged on to one of the best rounds I've ever had.

Restrict and suspend the battle within. First off, full disclosure: I have an internal battle like everyone else. It's different because I take time in meditation to notice it. I still get down on myself, but the lows become more tangible. Tangible means more manageable as I choose not to accept certain things about myself. Elimination of yuck isn't the point, so restrict access to that ideal. The prospect of eliminating can become brain candy to suck on. (Yes, I mean "suck" in two different ways here.)

One of the overriding benefits this whole New Year's restrictions deal can bring us is awareness. With awareness comes choice. This gives us the opportunity to allow a moment to be as it really is, not how we wish so mightily for that moment to be.

What does my weight, or smoking, or drinking, or drugs, or having too much sex have to do with any of this you ask? Is it not ultimately about relations with yourself? How 'bout a new year (we can start that year any day) where we meet our feelings with respect and kindness? Surely, we can all agree this is more loving than mashing our feelings down to drown them in a sea of shame. Or worse, ignoring and neglecting them @ our own peril.

□ □ □ □ *I hope what I've written will make an impact and provide an opportunity for fresh perspective. I, for one, am grateful we now live in a decade I don't have to stutter. Years and decades haven't felt natural coming from my lips since the 90's. All the best to our readers and all they touch, in the 20's.*