

PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



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STOP! Before you make that Resolution!



Every January, millions of Americans will make New Year's Resolutions. They will lose weight, save more money, get involved in church, be nicer to the dog...Every February, thousands of gyms, bank accounts, churches and dog dishes will stand empty.

What gives? Truthfully, New Year's Resolutions just don't work. Why?

- **They have a specific, rare start date.** What happens when (on January 3rd), you stumble while trying to accomplish a resolution? Let's say you accidentally eat all the leftover Christmas cookies. If you've waited all year to start that diet on January 1st, it's psychologically difficult to start all the way over on January 4th. Instead, our minds tell us "so much for that...we can try again next year..."
- **They are too broad.** A general New Year's resolution like "I will get organized" is huge and daunting. It's so broad: how will you know that you're making progress and at what point are you organized?
- **They are not measurable.** How do you measure closeness to God or niceness to the dog? Without the ability to measure your progress, it is easy to get sidetracked, discouraged or overwhelmed.
- **There are too many.** On the plus side, January 1st is a fresh start for many people. On the negative, trying to fix everything in your life all at the same time is a huge task. There are

■ by Melinda Hammond, PsyD, LCPC

only 24 hours in a day, and you are only one person. So if you resolve to do everything, chances are high you will feel like you've done nothing.

This is not to say that New Year's Resolutions are all bad, or that no one should make them. Nor does it mean that no one accomplishes their New Year's resolutions. But relying solely on your yearly resolutions is not a great way to make permanent change in your life.

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Mental Illness... It's time to TALK about it!!



**Do you have a heart for changing the way people think about mental illness?
Do you wish people understood what you/your family are going through?
Does your family suffer alone with mental health issues?**

We are excited about this event, which will feature **Amy Simpson**, speaker and author of the book "**Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission**". Drawing on her family's experience, Amy, a pastor's daughter, shares the social and physical realities of mental illness and explores new possibilities for ministry to this stigmatized group.

We are passionate about this topic and ask you to pray as we plan to bring together pastors, church leaders, supporters, and advocates to talk about how we can better respond to mental illness.

If you or your church would like to be involved in this important event, please call Nancy at 708.845.5500 x103

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So how can we make real changes in our lives?

- **Set your start date NOW.** Start today. Start in this moment. Start as soon as you can. If you struggle today, start over tomorrow. You can only act in one moment: this one.
- **Make a concrete, measurable goal.** Rather than "I will organize my house" maybe "I will get rid of 10 items a day" or "I will assign everything in the kitchen a place" By making your goal something you can measure, and something concrete, you can more easily track your progress and evaluate how far you've come.
- **Break down your big goal into smaller goals.** Goals seem less daunting if you only have to tackle a little bit at a time. A weight loss goal

can be broken down many ways: "I will lose a pound this week" "I will eat vegetables 3 times each day" "I will exercise 30 minutes, 3 times per week"

- **Measure your progress!** Make yourself a sticker chart. Keep track of miles run, minutes spent organizing, days where you read the Bible. By measuring your progress, you can see what you've accomplished, and become more motivated for future accomplishments.
- **Reward yourself!** You are much more likely to succeed when you reward yourself for your goals!
- **Know that you will fail. And give yourself permission to start again, regardless of the date.** No one is perfect. We all fall short. If you accept that you will fail at some point, it makes success even sweeter, and

mistakes less intimidating. It also makes it much easier to pick yourself up and try again.

- **Don't try to solve all of your problems at once.** You can't fix your relationship with your in-laws, lose 30 pounds, organize your house, save a million dollars and recycle all at the same time. Try one thing at a time, change one habit at a time. You can always start working on other goals in April.

Or June.



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and sees clients in our New Lenox
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The Heart of LISTENING

■ by Janet Irvine, PsyD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Clinical Coordinator



One day I got hopelessly lost, and found myself in a maze of cornfields. All of a sudden, rising out of nowhere, was a huge, brilliant white monastery. With time on my hands, I drove in to look around. No one was around and it was fascinating to walk the grounds. I came upon a little chapel, curiously named "The Place of Holy Listening." I went into this tiny jewel of sacred space, and spent a bit of time there. It occurred to me to pray that I might be a "holy listener."

The thought has intrigued me ever since. Since listening is a big part of a psychologist's job, I began to think of listening as holy; a consecrated act, a ministry, a means of healing. And while I miss the boat an awful lot (as we all do) it always is a joy to hear someone remark, "thanks for listening."

Listening is a rare commodity these days. Our western culture extols noisiness, loudness, talking over others, interrupting, making the point. However, if we want relationships to develop, heal, or deepen, listening to another is essential for that to happen.

Listening takes effort and patience. It requires us to put our own selves aside, take in thoughts, feelings, emotions and facts from another, and resist the temptation to simply wait for the noise to be done so we can make our own!

Listening is more than waiting for one person to get done so we can talk. It requires quite a bit of energy to stop what is going on within us, take in and process what the other is saying. At times, it can be a simple exchange of information; an easy give and take. But there are times when we share words that go far beyond exchanging factual data, into the complex world of feelings and emotions, which may not always be responded to with ease.

Our minds are acutely aware of complexities in the exchange of information, and without knowing it, arouse in us either a sense of safety or a sense of danger. A simple tone of voice, the volume, the quickness of what could be a neutral response is quickly processed by our minds and we often mindlessly respond with anger (when we perceive danger) or warmth and openness (when we sense safety.) A neutral written message may often make us angry, depending on how it is read, leaving the poor hapless sender rather bewildered after our response. If any written communication upsets you, take some time before you respond, or talk to the person face-to-face.

In conversations, listening with the goal of interpreting the other correctly and creating a safe place requires us to develop a stance of neutrality rather than being on the defense. We sometimes need to "set ourselves aside" and put ourselves in the other's shoes. Many times we assume that "getting in the last word" makes us the winner, but in reality, it serves to make for further division and strife.

Silence is also an important part of listening. When an emotionally charged discussion ensues, simply wait a bit before responding. Sometimes the speaker needs more time to develop a thought, and sometimes we need time to process, ponder and get in touch with own feelings.

Listening in our spiritual relationships is no different. When Jesus began His ministry by being baptized in the Jordan River, the importance of his initiation was marked by the presence of the Trinity. As the Holy Spirit, seen as a dove, hovered over Jesus, the Father's voice boomed from the heavens, "This is my beloved Son, LISTEN to Him". God was very clear that listening to Jesus would be important. We take in His Words, mull them over, wonder, wrestle and respond. And so, God spoke early on in His introduction regarding what should be our response to Jesus: L I S T E N !



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Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling,
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