



January 15th, 2012...Are Your Resolutions On Clearance Yet?

Turning New Year's Resolutions from Fiction to Non Fiction

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Recently I walked into a major book retailer and was assaulted with reminders that it was January, which means resolution time, and secondly, that our January resolutions often “go on sale or clearance”. Books titled [“Rid Yourself of Doubt, or Should You?”](#), [“Tremble Your Way to Fitness”](#), or [“Reorganizing Your Pockets”](#) serve as great fuel for change and promise ways to become the person your dog thinks you are. As millions of Americans make decisions to “Change” their behavior

through resolutions, it should delight me as a Performance Coach that so many are willing to face a toleration, a behavior or thought pattern they would like to change. But what dampens my spirits are the resolutions that ultimately become unkept promises. These unkept resolutions then become the fuel for the thoughts like “I can’t do anything right, I’ll never change, etc...” and for me, that is the head trash that clutters up the mind.

Resolutions are put on “clearance” like a retailer puts products on clearance when they have gone past their shelf life or are unsuccessful. Often resolutions get kicked to



the curb because they are “too hard” or because of a possible struggle with how to actually make the behavior change. Even resolutions fail because the change desired is too scary to make because of fear of the “unknown”. Change, although inevitable, fights us every step of the way. So what can make a resolution “stick” instead of becoming something you throw away two weeks?

Environmental Design might be one factor in your success or failure in keeping to your resolutions this year. And by Environmental Design, I don’t mean the spatial design show on HGTV or in the article on gardening in *Better Homes and Gardens*. Environmental Design is the process of addressing surrounding environmental parameters when devising plans, programs, policies, buildings, or products...and in this case, even behaviors. Often used in Architecture, Urban Planning, Landscape Design, Interior Design, and in this case, Environmental Design is the skill at addressing surrounding environmental factors when devising a desired behavior change.

Often, when we have decided to make a behavior or thought pattern change, we forget to scan our environment to see if it is designed to support us or derail us. And Environmental Design is the choice to have your environment support you and removing obstacles or draining factors that ensure failure. In fact, by creating a supportive environment, your environment does most of the heavy “lifting” allowing you to reduce your energy output and save it for celebrating your success.

Environmental Design is made up of 9 surrounding environments including your relationship, network, financial, memetic, self, spiritual, nature, body, and of course, your physical environment. If one of these environments challenges one of the others, disharmony is created and thus an obstacle is created. Or if one of these is designed to support the opposite of your desired behavior, you are dead in the water. Why? One of the theories of Environmental Design is based on “your environment always wins”. Sheer will, determination and stubbornness have a finite tank. Eventually, you will run out of will-power fuel. If your environment does not support you or creates obstacles, your determination and will power are spent fighting the challenges and you lose energy...fast. If however, the environment is designed to support you, you have to use much less willpower fuel (if any) and you flow through the change feeling supported and successful. With designed environments will power and commitment become optional.

So, back to taking your resolutions “off sale” and designing an environment to keep them this year. Consider perhaps taking the following steps:

1. Awareness is the first key. How does one know if their environment is supporting or impairing them? First, look around you and ask yourself, “What excuse have I made around my resolution?” From behind the excuse hides an environmental design flaw. Scan your 9 environments for obstacles that are getting in your way of succeeding. For example, if your resolution is to stop smoking, are you surrounding yourself with smoking? Look in your car for cigarette remnants, smells, etc. that remind you of smoking. Scanning

- your environment for factors that slow you down or even stop you from your efforts.
2. Design your 9 environments to support you. For example, share with your network or relationship environment (often called your “peeps” or your “inner circle” depending on your age) for support in your quest to quit smoking. Make them aware of your resolution and request their support in achieving your goals. That might mean not smoking around you if they are smokers as well or congratulating you when you hit a milestone in your resolution.
 3. Deliberately practice your new behavior pattern. And by practice, I mean give it mindful, aware-based effort. This is one step we often forget. How does a bad habit occur? We do something over and over again and it sticks. So how do you create a good habit? Do something different over and over again until it sticks....and ultimately overshadows the bad habit. And by deliberate, I mean practice as if it was “game day” not just a scrimmage. We so often sleep through our actions – allowing our bodies to go on auto pilot, but with any behavior change, deliberate, mindful actions create a deeper of performance than if you just “went through the motions”.
 4. Continuously scan your environments for roadblocks or tolerations that keep you from succeeding. Deliberate practice also requires feedback and self-observation and reflection. Great time to bring your relationship and network environment back into the picture – if you are doing something over and over again and you aren’t seeing change...ask for feedback. Am I doing this right? What are you seeing? Be prepared to look for and accept feedback. If you don’t know where you are, how can you know how far you have to go?
 5. Finally, celebrate your successes! This one is hard for many of us as we forget to do the “victory lap” when we have success. Instead of saying, “Wow, that took a lot of support, effort and deliberate practice to take that baby step, I should be very proud of myself” we say, “I can see some movement, but I must try harder.” So right at the moment when we should celebrate how far we come, we sabotage ourselves not being able to see what it took to get us there. Becoming aware of what got us there, keeps us from forgetting what it took if we get derailed. So do a victory lap – call a friend to celebrate, take time for yourself, eat something nourishing – whatever it is that makes you feel good. And while you are celebrating, remember what you are celebrating....your efforts, your environmental design and your deliberate practice.

So this year, before you put your resolutions “on sale”, try something new – design your environment to support your resolution and with deliberate practice watch your resolutions become exactly what they are suppose to be, a resolution to an issue you have faced but face no more! If you are unsure still how to design an environment to support you in your resolutions, please reach out to a Coach at The Coaching Center of Vermont and we will collaborate with you to create ideal environment for you!