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Heart, Hope, Healing

Choices, Not Resolutions (Happy New Year!)

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | JANUARY 1, 2019



We just can't help ourselves, can we?

We know we're here for a purpose. We feel the fire in our bellies. We want better, more meaningful, more connected lives. We want to be our best and do our best in the world.

So in this cool, dark, quiet space of winter, standing at the precipice (and promise) of a new year, we take pause. We take stock. We consider our dreams. What can we do to make them come true?

We know resolutions don't work.

They're abstractions. Ideas about who we'd like to become in the future, born from dissatisfaction with who we are today. They're often grandiose and tinged with toxic judgment. We're screwed from the get-go.

What if we create choices instead of resolutions?

If we think about it, every day and every moment of our lives we are choosing. As long as we are conscious we are choosing.

We may choose to just bounce along, allowing our external circumstances and random thoughts to throw us all around, untethered by guiding truths or intentions. *That's* a choice. To be a victim—that's a choice. To be stuck—that's a choice.

But a single *intentional* choice, created from self-love, powered by practice—a breath, a pause, a “yes,” a single decision to shift—gets us unstuck. Every time.

Like:

I choose healing. I choose love. I choose patience. I choose faith. I choose the high road. Not denying my humanity, my mistakes, and misjudgments. But choosing something else. From my strength.

What if instead of resolving to become something else or rejecting what we don't like, we harness our power to choose? To make a decision. To say, “yes.” To take action. To say, “yes,” again and again.

Resolutions shine a spotlight on our destination, but don't get us unstuck.

But choices are discerning. They help us recognize the deep grooves of the competition (you know, those old habits and stories that get us stuck, that we're ready to let go of).

Choices give momentum to our intentions. A simple “yes,” softly spoken, perhaps tentatively at first, that precedes the next “yes,” and the next. Or bellowed out from the gut, ready to release suffering, ripe for the journey of transformation.

“Yes” is the choice that breathes life into our intentions... every time.

How to Craft a Powerful Personal Choice Statement:

Beyond the beautiful sentences we write on our sticky notes and repeat to ourselves, how do we create affirmations that carry the strength of our choices? That lead to the deep, sustainable transformation we seek?

- First, claim your power to choose. For this you must slow down and pay attention. Recall how you're always choosing—harness this power of choice as your own with your careful, reverent attention.
- Then, consider what new choices you'd like to make. A solution to a problem? A needed change in how you eat, sleep, or move? A goal or challenge to meet with strength? To become healthier, happier, and more vibrant? To let go?

- Keep your new choices simple and limit yourself to no more than three. This engages the resources of your brain without overwhelming you, increasing your chances for success and sustainability.
- For each of your choices, create a positive, present tense statement.

Positive keeps you focused on the forward trajectory of the choice and not on what you're leaving behind.

Present tense telegraphs success—to your brain and the resources all around you.

- Attach a statement of gratitude—your open heart acts like a super attractor to Universal support and resources.
- Give those choices wings—put them into action. Now. And at each moment as you go forward. Only practice makes progress (deepening those new mind grooves). Giving thanks with every step.

Like this:

I choose to speak and write my truth, courageously putting my work out into the world. I am grateful for the opportunities to share what I know and for the endless support I receive for my work.

I choose to go slow and focus on doing just one thing at a time. I am grateful for the deep dive into what I love.

I choose the strength and insight to deflect the negative actions and words of those I love. I choose deeper understanding of their experience. I am grateful for the love and support flowing into my life constantly.

I choose to eat a healthy, irritant-free, nutrient-dense diet. Thank you, Universe, for nourishing me so beautifully and abundantly and supporting my choices.

How about you?

Unsure about what you want or need?

Just say, “yes” (simple is best anyway).

Say, “yes,” to healing. Say, “yes,” to love. Say, “yes,” to your self and your life.

What are your three personal choice-affirmations to greet the New Year? I'd love to hear from you!

I am so grateful to all of you! Thanks for reading and sharing this journey with me. Wishing

you so much joy, abundance, and growth in 2019.

Karyn

p.s. From my Archives:

[**Why Affirmations Don't Work.**](#) 2018.

[**Simple is Better: the "Rule of Threes."**](#) 2017.

[**New Year's Resolution: Be Soft, Be Gentle, Be Kind \(and start with yourself!\).**](#) 2018.

[**Celebrate the New Year With Self-Love.**](#) 2016.

E-books to support your healing path:

[**Big Energy: How We Bravely Reclaim Our Health, Our Potential, Our Lives—It's All In Our Stories.**](#) 2018.

[**Let Go—The Nine Domains of Healing: Step One.**](#) 2018.

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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