

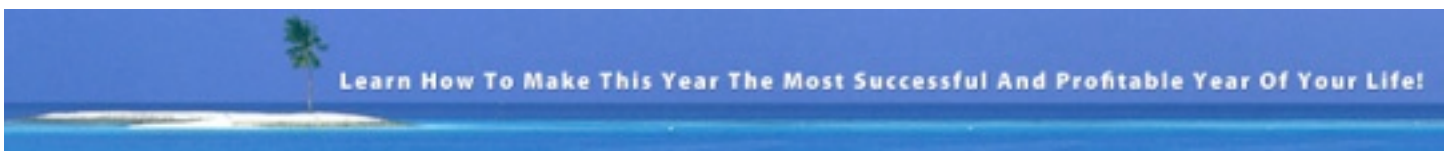


HOW TO MAKE THIS YEAR THE year!

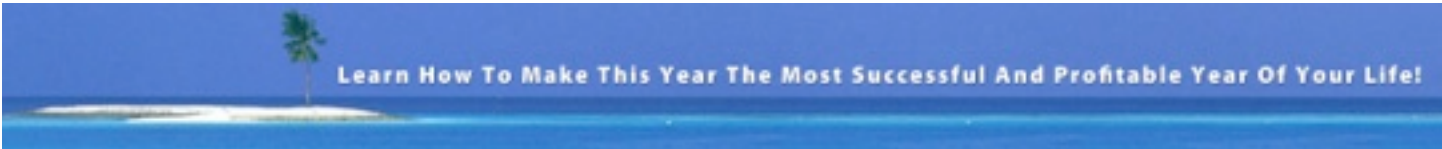
**Learn How To Make This Year The Most
Successful And Profitable Year Of Your Life!**

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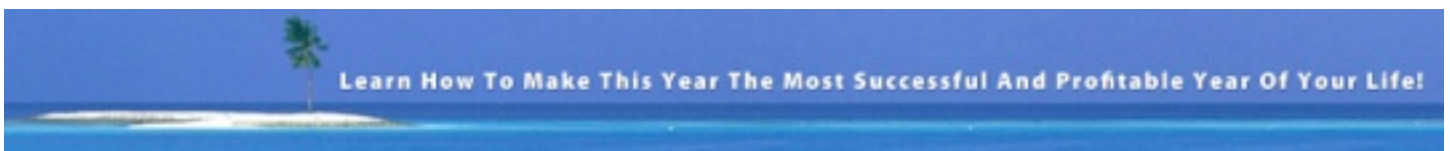
INTRODUCTION

Here are nine suggestions-- for ways to improve your life and make it your best year ever. Working on any one idea from four to six weeks should keep you busy without feeling pressured. Nine ideas in twelve months allows sufficient time in each area and provides ample time for those areas where you want to work longer.

Scan the list and begin with a topic that jumps out or intrigues you most. No one knows you as well as you know yourself. You're the only one who knows what to improve first or most.

Mary Poppins suggested: "Let's start at the very beginning...." Yes, indeed, it's a very good place to start. The beginning here is wherever you'd like it to be. The key is to experiment with all nine suggestions. But even if you only explore one or two areas, do it with gusto, excitement and enthusiasm.

Attitude is everything. Have the best attitude, change a rotten one if necessary, and you'll have the best year ever! Guaranteed.



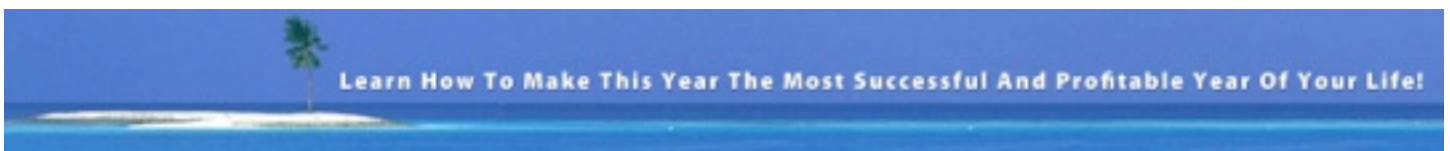
THINK "DE-CLUTTER" AS A WAY OF LIFE

Clutter is foremost a state of mind. Unclutter the mind and cluttered spaces almost take care of themselves. Cable television and network talk shows that feature "clutter interventions" increase in number and popularity every season. Half the battle for every anti-clutter guru is to change the clutter-bug's thinking and attitude toward their mess, their wall-to-wall sea of piles of stuff in which they attempt to live. The de-clutter expert might ask: "Do two children really need eight bicycles?" The chronic clutterer's obvious answer is "yes." In the hands of a de-clutter master, the clutterer extraordinaire soon realizes error of their ways and the insanity of a bicycle farm that has taken over the garage.

Understanding the Cluttered Mind

Wall-to-wall clutter is often the result of compulsive shopping which has little to do with the state of the economy, one's net worth or the value of goods. There are compulsive shoppers who are millionaires and there are relatively penniless compulsive shoppers living on unemployment or fixed retirement incomes. For the clutter-bug, less money only means inferior quality stuff. When a formerly wealthy clutterer can no longer afford to shop at luxury department stores, there's always the uniquely 21st-century phenomenon called "The Dollar Store."

No matter how much money is in someone's wallet, compulsive shopping is linked to the obsessive need to buy, the thrill that accompanies acquisition, the exhilaration of using a credit card, the rush of adrenaline felt when someone sees something, needs to own it and is able to add it to an already large and overly abundant pile of stuff. The spiritual thinker and author Eckhart Tolle was asked if his success has led to his owning more things. He replied that he loves to go shopping, but that he doesn't need to buy something when he sees it. He might see something beautiful and spend a moment or two appreciating and enjoying its beauty without experiencing a need to own the item.



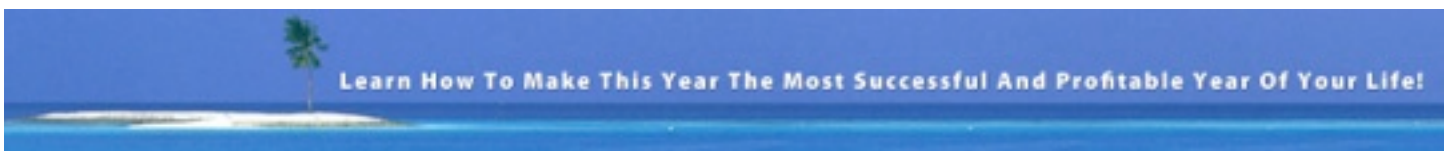
Here is someone who seems to have mastered, among many things, the art of window-shopping.

Cluttering has everything to do with a person's need to have "stuff" around them, to fill up Peter-Peter's proverbial pumpkin shell with bunches and bunches of things. Often people who need to fill up their lives with way too much of everything also fill their bodies with way too much food. Clutter guru Peter Walsh's latest book is entitled "Does This Clutter Make My Butt Look Fat?" He draws a direct correlation between cluttering, over-eating and not exercising. Often the overweight 'clutterista' doesn't exercise because there simply is no free space large enough for working out. Walsh sees a direct connection between stuffing yourself with food and stuffing your house, garage, basement, attic, car, storage unit, closets, drawers and shelves. For the overeating clutterer, the body is just another thing to fill up.

Clutterers are often collectors, again, having nothing to do with wealth. Collectibles, a.k.a 'clutter-ibles', can be amassed regardless of ones net worth, whether the economy is booming or tanking. Clutter-bugs will collect anything and everything, from old harmonicas to stuffed toys, radios, cookie jars, fur hats, safety pins, old greeting cards, or gum wrappers. For a wealthy collector, the object of one's affection might be \$10,000 handbags or sports cars. For the less privileged it could be bottle caps.

DE-CLUTTERING PREPS

Most people tend to think of containers as quick-fix miracle solutions, the universal salvation for clutter-bugs worldwide. The proliferation of containers in the past 25 years has increased exponentially, with each new version being yet another re-invention of the basic box. Entire companies and stores exist solely for the purpose of providing the world with things in which to put things. Contrary to what many believe, containers alone are not the answer to clutter. Containers are for organizing. And clutter cannot be organized. Containers are the final step in de-cluttering, not the first. Clutter-bugs, with their unbridled passion for buying things, love to buy containers and leave them in shopping bags sitting in the corner for months.



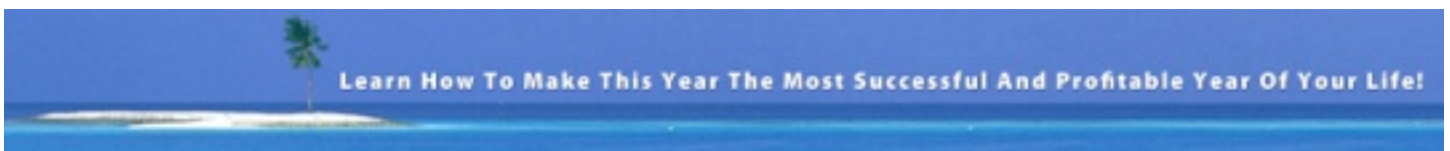
Unused, empty containers are as much "clutter" as the stuff for which they were purchased. Containers can be just one more "collectible."

There is no shortage of books on how to get rid of clutter. Hundreds, if not thousands, of books have been written on how to de-clutter one's home, office, garage, workshop or purse. New ones come out every month. The tendency of the well-meaning clutter-reformist, determined to conquer their problem once and for all, is to begin amassing every book ever published on the subject and only adding to over-stocked, disorganized and cramped bookshelves bursting with many books which have never been read. A better place to search for books and tips on de-cluttering is at the public library, where there are rows and stacks of books on the subject. Starting at the library shows good faith in wanting to eliminate clutter rather than add to it with yet another item. Purchasing one book that you favor among others can be beneficial; but buying two dozens books on de-cluttering is not a good start. Professional organizers with Internet websites devoted to clutter are another valuable source of information and advice.

BEGIN SORTING

A good first step in de-cluttering is to eliminate what isn't of value. First deal with all the excess stuff in your life to which you're emotionally attached - those birthday cards from your late Grandmother, photos of your first dog, or the ticket stub from your first rock concert. Separate the emotional clutter from practical clutter. Create a "Memory Box." Here's where a storage bin with a flip-top lid can be put to good use, but any box with a lid will do. Every time you find something that evokes "Awwwww," before your eyes start tearing, toss it in the Memory Box. When the memory box gets full, you'll have to deal with that, too, but for a beginning, just getting all the sentimental clutter in one spot is a major achievement.

Another step in de-cluttering is to keep only what has monetary value. If you've run out of closet and drawer space because you own 300 T-shirts, line them up on the bed or other large surface according to value, least to most expensive. Find the "happy medium," keep the more valuable half and eliminate the rest.



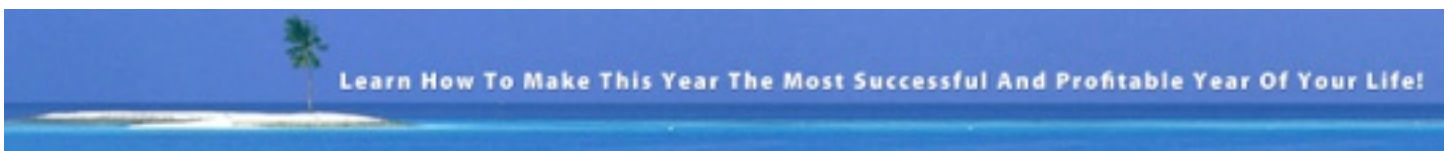
If you look honestly at the least expensive half, you'll admit the low-end group probably couldn't even be given away, let alone sold at a garage sale. Live with the best you can afford, if you want your life to be the best it can be.

The traditional sorting tool is a three-step decision: Toss-Keep-Sell/Donate. This is a tried-and-true method that many have used with great success. But for the chronically, certifiably, clutter-challenged, the process can be simplified further to require fewer decisions. If you're working alone and aren't fortunate enough to have a TV crew knock on your door with a team of makeover/takeover people...if you're a lone clutter-buster facing your private mountain of collectible clutter-ibles, a simpler method can be more efficient. Trash or treasure? You keep the treasures and trash the rest.

IDENTIFYING & DEALING WITH TRASH

There are three types of trash. The first type is anything you don't want, regardless of its real or imagined value. Question yourself until you're able to make a decision on an item. Do I love this? Do I really want this in my life? Would I care if this burned in a fire? Would I pack this on a trip for a week? Does it need repair? Is it dirty? If even a slight negative feeling comes up during questioning, it means the thing is trash. Anything you don't like, even in the slightest, is the stuff that goes. Anything you genuinely treasure, the stuff that makes you feel warm and cozy, the sweater that makes you smile, that's what stays. This process of elimination has a dual benefit. It cleans out your living space while eliminating negativity in your head and surroundings.

The second type of trash is real trash, anything broken, stained, dirty, ripped or cracked. It's junk. If something needs repair and you've neglected to fix it, you've learned to live without it for perhaps six months that it's been on your "to-do" list. Chances are you've already replaced it; it's un-useable; it's trash. If you're plagued with guilt over tossing the old coffee-maker that's missing a carafe, put it outside near the trash cans, where it belongs, with a note: "Still works." The dumpster divers will love you.

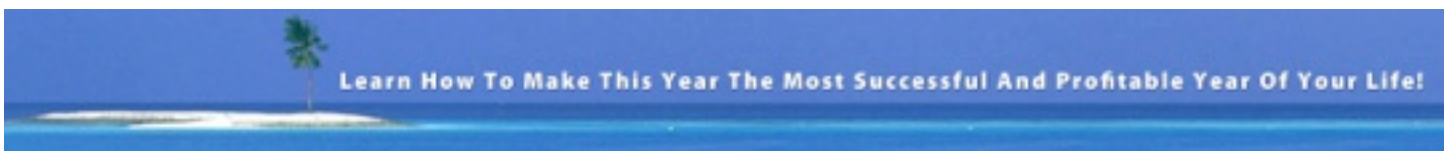


Third, you have to deal with trash you think might be treasure to someone else. Then again, maybe not. Donating is tricky. When asked what "Goodwill" will accept, a candid worker has replied: "If you don't want it, we don't want it." No one does anyone a favor by donating unusable junk, your ripped, broken, dirty old stuff. It's mean-spirited to expect other people to want or use your junk. Only donate functional, useable items. An old transistor radio that barely gets reception is only valuable to a collector or repairman for parts, not to someone who needs a radio. Junk by any other name is still junk. In many cases, you will have to take a deep breath, close your eyes, wish your junk a fond farewell, thank it for serving you...and toss it.

Selling what you no longer need at a garage sale, online auction or with a newspaper or bulletin board ad, is another option. But be aware it's probably not going to yield a fortune. First, you have to find a buyer and, second, you have to get a fair price. To successfully sell an item, you need to know what it's worth in the current market. Seldom is your precious cargo worth as much as you think. Everyone in the second-hand, "used" market is looking for a bargain. Be prepared to get 'something' for the things you sell, but rarely will the proceeds buy a new Mercedes. You'll have to decide if the time and effort to sell something is worth it in the long run. Often the most efficient way to get rid of useable items is to donate them.

WHAT NOW?

Left with only things you truly treasure, you've probably eliminated half the clutter you had when you began. Now, you're ready to organize, which will be easier than you think. Organizing is putting things where they belong. "A place for everything, and everything in its place." The process will take planning and perhaps several organizational aids, such as "those containers" but eventually things will almost organize themselves. Eliminating clutter means living with open, cleared spaces and surfaces. Creating that environment will free not only your countertops and closet floor. Living clutter-free will open your life and clear the way for what lies ahead to enter your life without tripping and falling on its face.

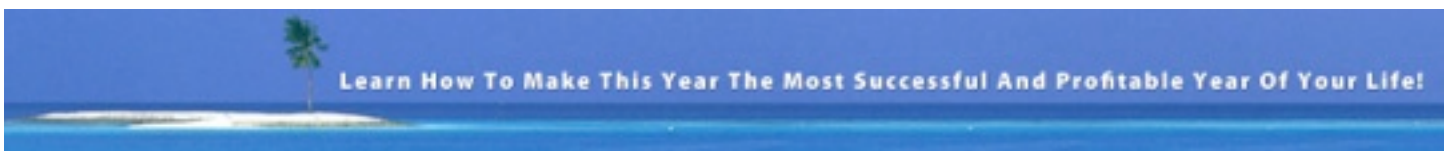


ADD AN AEROBIC EXERCISE

The benefits of exercise are well documented and irrefutable, except among the lazy or uninformed. Strength training, or body building, utilizes free weights, elastic bands, resistance machines and certain exercises (push-ups and chin-ups) to contract muscles and make them larger, stronger and more toned. Flexibility training extends range of motion and creates elongated rather than knotted muscles and supple joints with simple stretching, yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi and Qi Gong, among other methods. Aerobic exercise requires rhythmic movement, sustained intensity and increased breathing while using the larger muscles in the arms and legs. The heart and lungs in aerobic activity pump oxygen to the muscles which determines how long the muscle can work without tiring. Research shows that aerobic activity is the best method for burning calories and reducing fat deposits in the body. Medically, aerobic training is recommended for individuals with a host of maladies including high blood pressure, clogged arteries, diabetes and depression.

VARIATION

An ideal fitness program incorporates all three types of exercise to produce strength, flexibility and endurance. Adding new and different exercises is beneficial because exercise is repetitive and easily becomes mindless. For a physical exercise to be totally effective it should engage both body and mind. Performing an exercise with concentration and deliberation is far better than going through the motions with the mind off in another direction. Starting a new exercise focuses the attention on learning a new skill. Professional athletes recognize the value of cross-training and the benefit of engaging in different sports, utilizing different muscles, and developing different skills. Even cross-training becomes stale if you only do two different activities over and over.



AEROBICS!

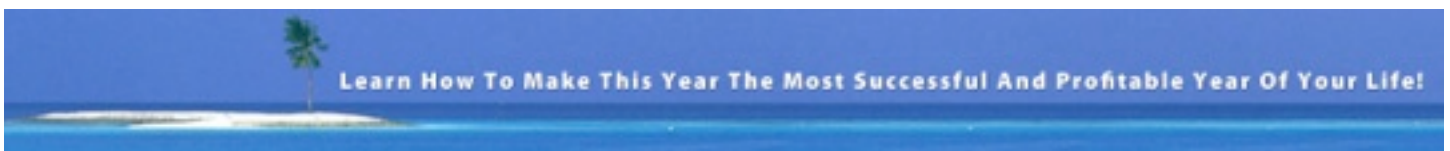
Why make a new exercise an aerobic activity? No matter which type of exercise you prefer, you'll be able to do it more efficiently for longer periods if your heart, lungs and muscles are working to their optimum. Rhythmic motion coordinated with breathing invigorates the mind and body like nothing else. A yoga practice can be enhanced by adding an aerobic routine which will increase the delivery of oxygen to muscles when they twist and stretch during yoga postures. Similarly, bodybuilding is aided by alternate aerobic activity which enables increased reps and heavier weights. If you're currently a runner or jogger, adding another aerobic exercise will provide variety and a new challenge. You don't have to abandon your exercise of choice, simply add an additional aerobic activity for better results and added enjoyment.

WALKING

Walking, the easiest and least expensive exercise, is the single most effective and most popular type of aerobic activity. Its overall health benefits cannot be overstated. People who want to lose weight invariably begin by reducing caloric intake, which is quite effective. But after the first ten pounds are lost, the dieter reaches a plateau. When walking is added to the diet regimen, the pounds again begin to disappear without further reduction of calories. Walking requires no special equipment, other than appropriate shoes and it can be timed to fit into a busy schedule. It's a good exercise on its own, or a flexible addition to an existing program. Good walking habits include parking in the furthest area in the mall, and using stairs instead of elevators whenever possible.

OTHER CHOICES

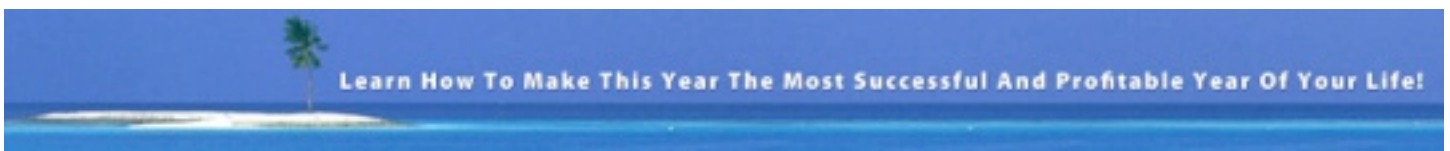
Aerobic choices include running, jogging, slide or step aerobics, bicycling, rowing, swimming, water aerobics, and dancing. Plus, there's aerobic value in having fun and playing sports. Basketball, baseball, golf, tennis and tossing a frisbee qualify as aerobic activities. There's also aerobic benefit from doing chores such as vacuuming, sweeping, mowing the lawn, raking leaves, shoveling snow and walking the dog. Rather than hiring someone to perform dreaded chores, look forward to them as an opportunity to improve your health and well being.



HOW TO EXERCISE

There are several schools of thought regarding when and how long to exercise. Elaborate schedules of 30 minutes here or there, 15 minutes three times a week, one-half hour at bedtime, 20 minutes twice a day, five days a week for an hour, and so on. These complicated formulas are primarily concocted to reduce boredom. One theory cuts through the babble and points out that we eat every day, we breathe every day, we think every day, and we need to exercise every day. It's far better to perform a different exercise every day of the week than to repeat the same one three times a week and rest in between on off-days.

Exercising isn't a necessary evil that deserves to be rewarded with a day off. Daily exercise benefits overall health, increases energy, prolongs stamina, and generally makes you feel good. Who doesn't want to feel good every day of the week? Furthermore, why wait until the end of the day to exercise and feel good? Exercise performed in the morning sets the tone for the entire day. Studies have shown that people who work out before they begin their day have far greater endurance throughout the day than when they exercise after work. Putting fitness first and enhancing your performance throughout the day seems a good lifestyle choice.

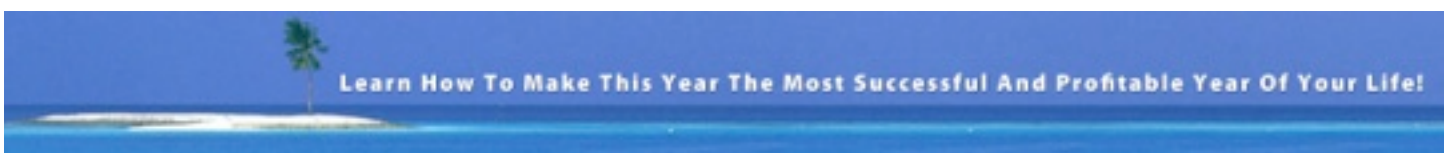


LEARN TO MEDITATE, OR FIND OUT WHY YOU'RE "NOT INTO IT"

Meditation began thousands of years ago, before Christianity. Gautama Buddha practiced meditation 500 years before the birth of Jesus, who along with Christian contemplatives throughout history engaged in a form of meditation while in long periods of prayer. Meditation is no longer only practiced by Tibetan monks in a monastery, or yogis sitting in a cave or on a blanket somewhere in Delhi. Though its roots are in a spiritual or Eastern tradition, meditation has been a part of Western thought increasingly since the early 20th century. Yogis and swamis have traveled the globe teaching meditation to the rest of the world. Westerners have traveled to remote corners of Asia to learn all they can about this ancient technique.

Meditation is practiced worldwide irrespective of religion or lack of it, by individuals seeking relaxation, stress reduction and pain relief, in addition to those seeking spiritual enlightenment. Recognized as a valid element of brain science, meditation is studied in hospitals throughout the United States, Great Britain, Europe, and parts of the Middle East. Increasingly, Western medicine is recognizing the curative power of meditation through continual research into the intricate working of the mind-body complex and the power of the mind to create an individual's reality and determine the quality of one's life.

Meditation is not a state of mind; it's a state of non-mind. It's a way to empty the mind and enter a realm beyond the mind and thinking. Initially, learning to meditate involves skills such as concentration, focus or contemplation, in other words mind training that is beneficial on both psychological and spiritual levels. There's a wide variety of techniques for training the mind but they are not the end goal of meditation. They're aids for getting to the meditative state. Techniques involve a vast array of postures, breathing and chanting that are taught at yoga centers, health clubs, hospitals, churches, universities, even YMCA fitness programs. The supply of books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs is endless. There's are meditative techniques for everything from healing to becoming more loving, clearing one's mind of wandering thoughts, attuning to stillness, experiencing "the moment," eliminating negative thinking, becoming more peaceful, or any of thousands of goals. But basically, meditation is simply closing ones

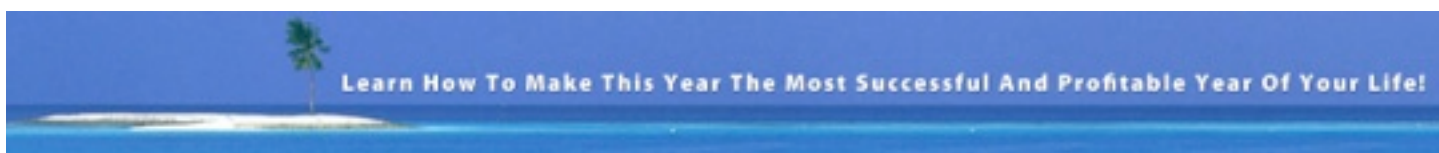


eyes, turning inward and experiencing consciousness. Again meditative techniques are tools for reaching an inner state of being.

There are several reasons a person might not be interested in meditation. The main objection, even today, is that meditation is some kind of whacky, religious, alternative lifestyle, hippie thing-y. Secondly, meditation requires patience; it's often second-nature to a beginner, but for others it requires diligence and determination to find the proper method or teacher. Additionally, there are those who want a guarantee before they begin that meditation will promise immediate, positive results in their external world, that meditation will make them "Superman" or "Wonder Woman." Finally, the majority of people feel they are just too busy meeting round-the-clock demands of computers, cell phones, TV, work and personal obligations to find even 15 minutes a day to meditate. There are doubtless scores of other reasons for not meditating, but these are a few main objections.

Possibly the most attractive argument for meditation is it provides the best method for reaching inside to the core of one's being and finding joy, enthusiasm, excitement and happiness, no easy task in this or any other millennium. Once that place is touched, there is no limit to the ability of the individual to create and manifest what they want. Rhonda Byrne's "The Secret," which has sold more than 5 million copies, is filled with testimony to the transformative power of meditation. By practicing meditation the individual arrives at a place where they find self-guidance to solve problems, make decisions and understand life's complexities. That place is where ideas are sparked, even the elusive "next big idea."

The meditative state is where men and women have gone for eons to create, whether inventing a light bulb, figuring out how to fly to the moon, painting a masterpiece, solving an economic crisis, or fixing a leaky garage roof. Meditation is a journey to a place where you can hear yourself telling you what to do. It's a good place where confusion and doubt do not exist. Being able to get there requires commitment and discipline but it's definitely worth the investment. The payoff is a happiest heart, healthiest body and clearest mind you've ever had, literally the best of everything.



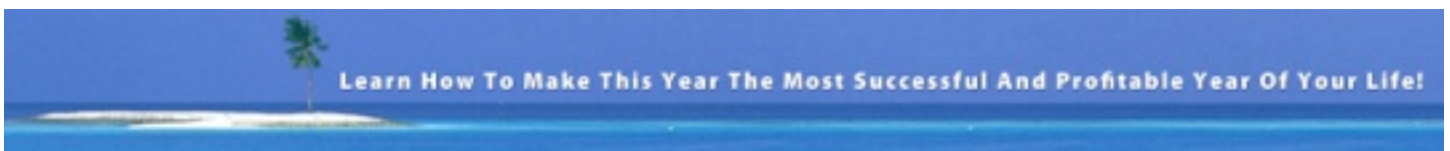
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PAY OFF DEBT: CREDIT CARDS & FAVORS OWED

Being in debt is a lousy way to live. When we owe "the universe," it is difficult for the universe to provide the things we want. Life is a delicate balance of forces and energy. When you're heavily in debt, life's balance is upset and the scales tilt heavily against you. That imbalance is a constant source of worry, giving us a collective, national headache - not to mention stress, weight gain, ulcers, depression, anger and low self-esteem. Why have we done this to ourselves, created this self-inflicted pain?

We are not solely to blame. TV, magazines and newspapers are filled with suggestive advertising telling us what we need, in which color, where and when we need it, and why. We've also been indoctrinated to best pay for whatever it is by charging it to a credit card. The romance and lure of being able to charge something we can't afford is inescapable. Shop-til-you-drop is a world-class sport. "I can't afford it" has all but disappeared from modern society and been replaced with "charge it, please." "Cash or credit?" has become a question of 'Which card will that be?'

Most people aren't aware how they got into tens of thousands of dollars of debt, or what they're spending every month. If they ever total their debts, the shock nearly produces a coronary attack. Ask someone how much they spend every month on TV cable and DVD rentals or purchases and they haven't a clue. Do you know how much you spend a month on lattes? Or do quickly pay with a card at the drive-thru and whiz off, stuffing the receipt in an empty cup holder? How much was the car wash, dry cleaning, or grocery bill and fast-food purchases for a month? The first step in getting out of debt is knowing where you spend every penny of your monthly income. Debt counselors advise keeping a daily notebook of expenditures and record exactly what you're spending and where you're charging.



MAKE A SPENDING PLAN

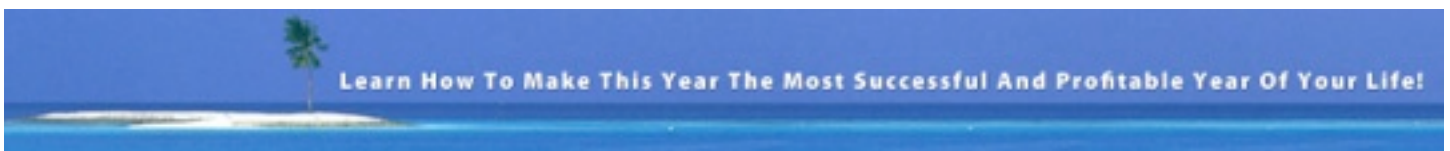
Getting out of debt involves creating a reduced spending plan with the help of a trustworthy friend or dispassionate financial advisor. Be genuinely sincere about cutting back expenses with old-fashioned 'belt-tightening.' It's not difficult to recognize what you can reasonably do without and where those frivolous extras can be eliminated, or at least scaled down. With every purchase, ask yourself: Do I NEED this or do I WANT this? For your spending plan to work, it involves honesty on a continual basis. It's possible to avoid additional, new debt simply by buying nothing except what you need for one month. When you see how easy it is, you'll want to continue for a longer period. Before you know it, you will have gone one year without adding to your debt and substantially reduced old debt merely with minimum payments.

MAKE A LIST TO TICK OFF

Another way to reduce current debt is by listing all debt in order of ascending amount, from the smallest to the largest. Pay the minimum on all accounts to stay current, but make a double payment on the smallest bill, which will be the easiest and quickest to pay off completely. If you find a month when you can make a triple payment, that is even better. Another technique is to make a minimum payment plus the amount of monthly interest. If this is possible, it will show a drastic reduction of debt within a few months. A third method for paying off debt is to arrange bills according to interest rate and aim for completely paying off bills in order of highest interest rates first.

FIND ADDITIONAL INCOME

Sometimes cutting back on expenses and making increased payments is not enough to make a difference in your debt, and you might need to find other sources of income. Extra part-time work is an option if time and circumstances allow. If you're handy in the kitchen, you might offer to cook for parties or sell your homemade specialties at a local market. Martha Stewart began her multi-billion dollar empire selling homemade pies on a table set up outside her home.

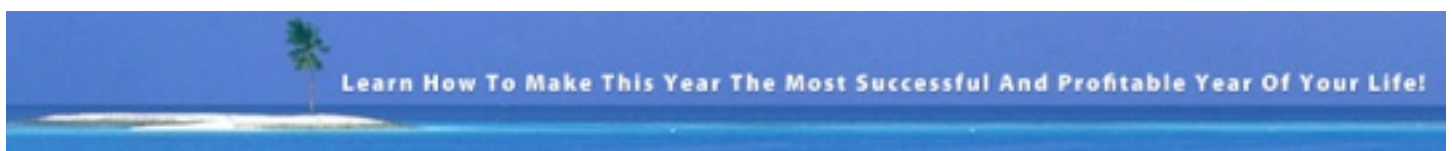


Another good source of additional income is selling things of value that you no longer need, either in an online auction, on a social networking site, or with a newspaper or bulletin board ad.

REPAYING FAVORS

Having made a commitment to eliminate financial debt, repaying a favor or making good on an old promise to do someone a favor is equally important if you want to not be in debt any longer. Start with people in your life presently. Did you offer to help someone paint their living room and then back down? Have you been eating dinner at your friend's house every month for the past year and never returned the favor or reciprocated in any way? Do you get a birthday card from Aunt Millie every year but never remember to send her one, or even call? Do you never feel an obligation to return a favor? Do you take people's kindness toward you for granted, without ever going out of your way for them? As Forrest Gump would say, "Kindness is as kindness does." If payback for generosity and consideration is not your habit, you might be seriously "in debt." While you're at it, spend a little time, not an obsessive amount, looking to the past. If you slighted someone or took advantage of them repeatedly, chances are they've been a nagging subconscious presence, that one day might surface. Twelve-step programs call it "making amends," either directly or with a letter that might never get sent if the person is no longer in your life.

Wiping the slate clean, whether on a personal level or financially, feels good and liberating no matter when it's done. It requires honesty, sacrifice and commitment. It guarantees a new beginning a necessary first step toward your best year ever.



EAT BETTER - NOT NECESSARILY LESS

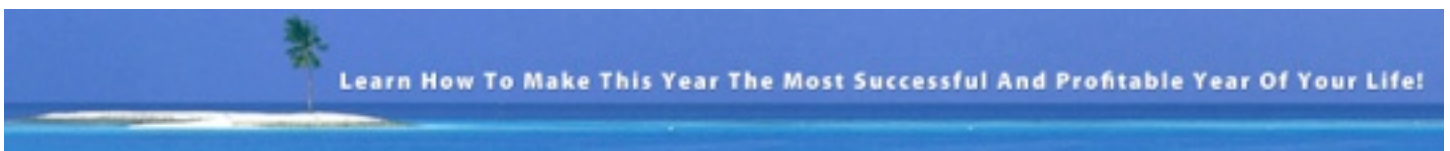
The entire United States is a diet obsessed society and ironically we are one of the fattest nations on the planet. Americans spend \$40 billion dollars a year on diet pills, weight loss programs, diet books, stomach stapling and weight-loss gizmos and contraptions sold on late-night TV. (How about that belt that gets rid of ab-flab, with no diet or exercise whatsoever?)

With such a huge capital investment in weight-loss, why is the U.S. the world leader in obesity? One theory is the United States is the least nutrition conscious nation in the industrialized world. We consume massive quantities of "empty calories" that satisfy no one and only cause a person to eat, you guessed it, more empty calories. We stuff ourselves with the wrong foods and we're hungrier than ever. Most people fail to understand that eating sugar only makes you want more sugar, and high-protein foods eliminate sugar cravings and provide high amounts of energy.

WHAT WE EAT – NOT HOW MUCH WE EAT

Rather than focusing on what not to eat, a better approach is to focus on improving the quality of what we put into our bodies. Research has shown when the body is well nourished with fresh, delicious food, an insatiable appetite and addictive eating disappear. Dieting is often the last thing an overweight person needs because their body is starving for healthy nutrients. Diets don't work, for example, because they're temporary ways to lose 10 pounds in 10 days. When a dieter resumes normal eating, the subsequent weight gain invariably is 10+ pounds, more often 15 pounds. Successful weight loss only occurs with lifestyle changes and sensible nutrition.

Nearly everyone would benefit from better nutrition, not just chubby folks. Thin people often eat as poorly as fat people but it doesn't show in extra poundage either because they have a speedy metabolism or simply consume less. Certain dietary changes could benefit everyone and provide better health and more energy for enjoying life. There are many ways to improve one's diet. Here are a few worth considering.

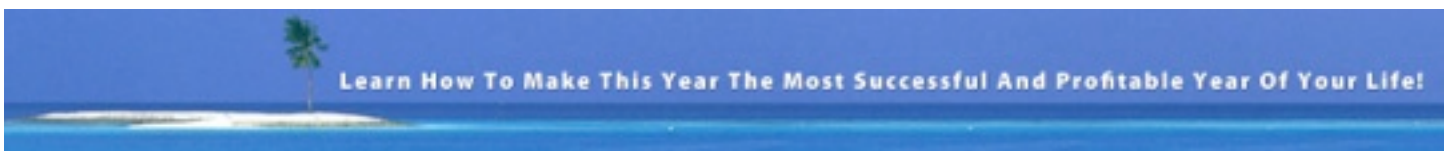


ORGANIC FOOD

Organic foods, grown naturally without toxic fertilizers, pesticides, synthetic chemicals or harmful antibiotics, are becoming increasingly more available from mainstream grocery chains. They're easiest to find at available specialty stores, local market and gourmet shops. Organic farming of fruits, vegetables, poultry, beef and dairy products yields more nutritious, better tasting and less harmful foods than those grown using toxic chemicals. No one argues these foods generally are more delicious than their chemically grown counterparts. Once you've tasted fresh squeezed juice from organically grown oranges, there's no going back to non-organic juice. Eggs from free-range hens raised without antibiotics are tastier than any others. The same can be said for organic milk from grass fed cows who roam the hillside rather than spend their lives eating grains inside a stall barely larger than the animal itself. Unfortunately, organic foods cost more and many believe this makes them unaffordable. If your budget doesn't allow for a totally organic pantry and refrigerator, you owe it to yourself to experiment with a few organic items. You don't have to go completely organic to reap the benefits of healthier eating, only substituting a few items will dramatically improve your diet.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

You've heard it before, and you'll undoubtedly hear it again many times. Nevertheless, it can't be overstated. It's a really good idea to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables, especially green leafy ones, and consume less red meat. Going completely meatless or totally veggie is a personal decision that requires a major commitment to a certain lifestyle. But gradual changes are easy for anyone who wants to improve their overall health, especially the heart, circulation, and digestive system. Adding more fish to the diet provides essential oils lacking in most diets. Protein and fiber from fresh fruit and vegetables provide increased energy and cut sugar cravings. Unfortunately, many people go days, sometimes weeks, without a vegetable while overloading on sugar, starch and animal fat. Fruits and vegetables are a source of water, a vital nutrient that cannot be consumed to excess.



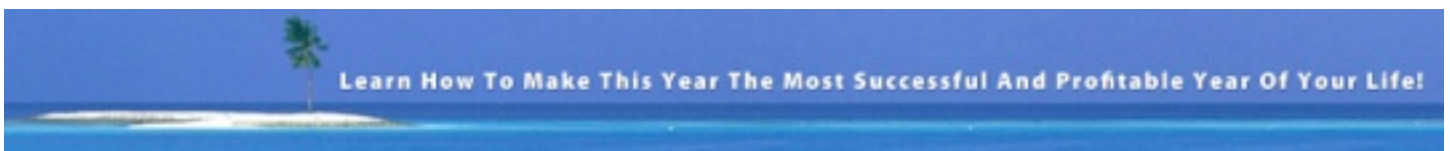
Water retention when it occurs is a health issue that needs to be addressed, but people die from dehydration not from drinking too much water. The need for at least 32 ounces of water a day is something everyone knows but too often ignores.

GREEN DRINKS

Green Drinks are called super-foods and rightly so. They're made from the combined juices of the leafiest, greenest vegetables on the planet. They're the easiest, healthiest most delicious way to ensure you're getting essential nutrients every day. They're great for adults, especially seniors, and when doctored with natural sugar from a carrot or apple, they're the best way to ensure children, especially those who "just hate greens," get all they need.

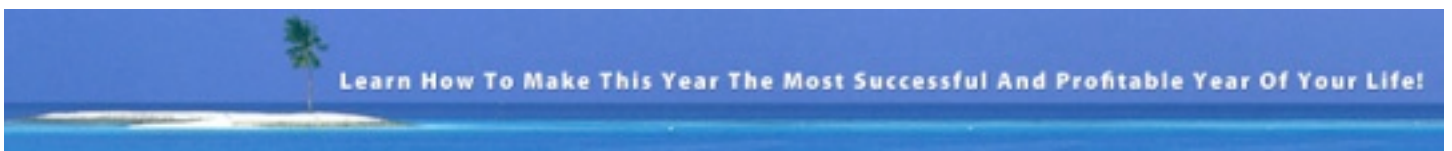
Excellent green drinks made from cucumber, spinach, celery, lettuce, zucchini or similar greens can be purchased in bottles, or you can create your own with a home juicer. The benefits of a juicy, green drink are easier digestion, quicker and more thorough absorption of nutrients, and greater consumption of greens. It's difficult to eat a head of lettuce, but the juice from an entire head of lettuce goes down quickly and easily. You're unlikely to eat celery, kale, parsley and zucchini for lunch, but when juiced together it makes a delicious meal that's easy and convenient.

One health benefit of green vegetables is increased flow of oxygen to every part of the body from large amounts of chlorophyll. Additionally, a balance of greens provides essential minerals lacking in most diets. Raw vegetables contain enzymes necessary for proper digestion and cell metabolism; cooking removes these enzymes from vegetables, leaving them with little nutritive value. A daily green drink is one of nicest things you can do for yourself or a loved one.



AVOID EATING OUT

Whatever diet you choose, you'll eat more nutritiously if you avoid restaurants and the fast-food drive-thru as much as possible. Every food cooked at home with love is far more nutritious than mass-produced, impersonal food, which is what you're getting from anyone other than a master chef in a five-star restaurant. You needn't cut out restaurant dining completely, but if you routinely eat out five nights a week, try making it less frequent. Home cooking is an opportunity to show how much you care about yourself and the people for whom you cook. Food lovingly prepared with attention to detail is an act of kindness and nurtures all who eat it. It's an excellent way to be good to yourself and others, a way to give and a way to receive when someone returns the favor. Good food prepared and served with care tastes better and is the best gift you can give yourself.

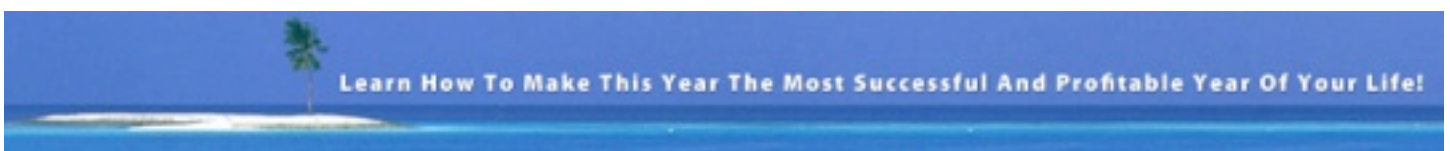


WATCH LESS TV

Television ranks as a major wonder of the modern age, right up there with the automobile, polyethylene and Google. Decades before there was an Internet or the world-wide-web, television linked the world. Television has been magical from its earliest days of scheduled programming in the U.S. in the 1940s to Sputnik sending the first pictures from Space in 1957 and the first 'live' global transmission - the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) "Our World" in 1967 - when John Lennon's debut of "All You Need Is Love" was beamed via satellite to 14 countries. Two years later, 600 million people around the world watched Neil Armstrong take the famous "giant leap for mankind" when he stepped on the Moon for the first time. Nearly 30 years later, the funeral of Britain's Princess Diana drew the largest 'live' TV audience to date, a record 2.5 billion viewers.

Television has educated, entertained, and brought people together more than any other medium. The average viewer in the United States spends 142 hours every month watching television, according to Nielsen Company latest research for 2008. (The figure far eclipses the average person's 27 hours per month on the Internet.) Roughly 4.7 hours per day, nearly 30% of a person's waking hours are spent in a sedentary position, with the mind fixated in a passive state receiving non-stop sensory input, with their thoughts being directed by programming and advertising calculated to attract and hold one's attention. The average American reaches the age of 65 having spent nearly thirteen years with their eyes glued to a television screen.

Television can be an addictive, essentially passive activity, interrupted only by channel surfing with a remote control or a trip to the kitchen during commercials, often prompted by the commercial itself with irresistible images of tantalizing food to excite the taste buds. Research shows that happy people engage in social activities, intellectual pursuits and hobbies and watch far less television than unhappy people. Other studies link the well-documented obesity epidemic in the United States among adults as well as children to excessive time in front of a TV. The rise in attention-deficit disorders among all age groups is linked to television's bombardment of viewers with continually more rapid video editing in everything from drama to news broadcasts and commercials.



The ability to focus is further impaired by multi-media pursuits. Nearly one-third of all television viewers admit to watching TV and engaging simultaneously in either the Internet, radio, personal music player or mobile phone texting.

The television addiction can be broken by a few self-disciplinary measures proven to limit couch-potato behavior and provide more time for participation in satisfying and productive activities. It's not necessary to cut television out of one's life completely to create a positive and more meaningful life. Simply watch TV less and participate more in life. Here are a few tips to help increase quality-time TV.

- **Generally, reduce television time by half**

If you watch TV the national average of 4.7 hours each day, limit yourself to two hours. If withdrawal pains are acute, watch one hour less per day and gradually get down to two hours maximum viewing time.

- **Only five...**

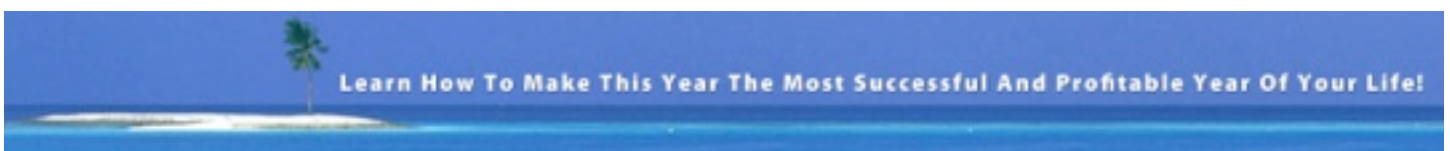
Another withdrawal technique is to pick five favorite shows per week and watch only those. An occasional special, such as an awards show, can be added as a well-earned reward for your self-discipline.

- **A TV free day a week**

Designate one day every week for a completely TV-free period of 24 hours. At first, this can be excruciatingly painful, but if you've been diligent about finding alternative ways to spend your time meaningfully, it won't take long to adjust. Eventually, you might choose to add an additional no-television day.

- **Record only**

Use a DVR (digital video recording) service or VHS videotape machine to record programs and watch them at your convenience. This saves hours of time wasted watching television between programs, waiting for a program to begin, or watching a program because it immediately follows something else you've been watching.



- **Watch without adverts**

Rent DVDs or watch movies on cable TV or pay-per-view to satisfy your need for drama, comedy or educational programming. Not only can you better control when and what you watch, your attention span will not be fractured by an assault of rapidly edited commercial interruptions every 12 minutes, often more frequently.

- **Avoid turning on the TV because you're lonely**

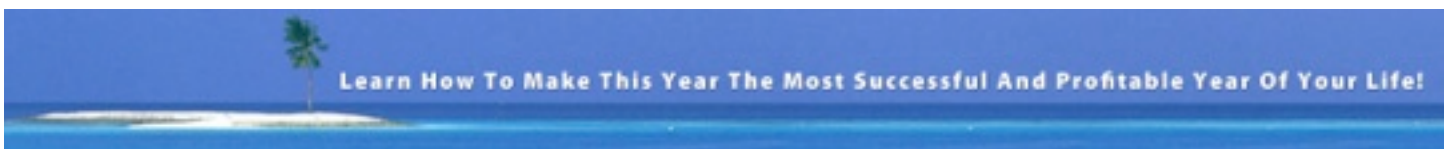
You might think television personalities are your BFF (best friends forever), but it's highly doubtful they know you exist. In fact, celebrities go to great lengths to protect their privacy and keep their viewers at a distance. When was the last time one of your TV heroes wrote or called? If you need to hear another voice, call someone on the telephone. A text-message won't do the trick. A genuine conversation is a healthy substitute for turning on the television when what you really need is two-way communication.

- **Avoid using a remote control**

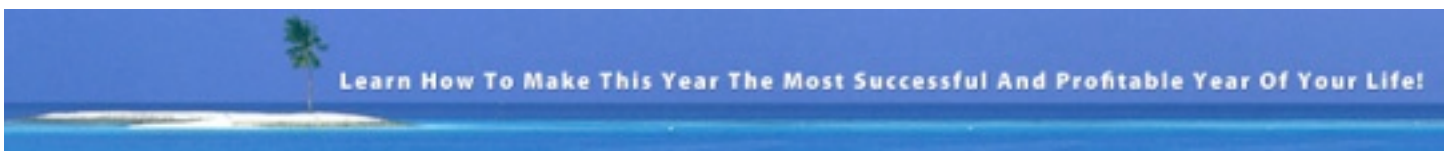
Again, withdrawal can be painful. Force yourself to get up to change the channel. At least keep the remote in another room, get it when you need it and return it to its other location before you sit down to watch a program. You'll be forced to deliberately choose a particular program and it will be get you off the sofa or out of a comfy lounge chair. If a show is not worth getting up to change the channel, is it worth watching? Without a remote control, you'll also break the habit of channel surfing aimlessly, sometimes as many as three or four times through the entire channel lineup with endless snippets of video before you find something you want to watch. If you're chronically channel surf, hoping to find something, anything, that draws your attention, you're bored, and it's time to find something more interesting to you.

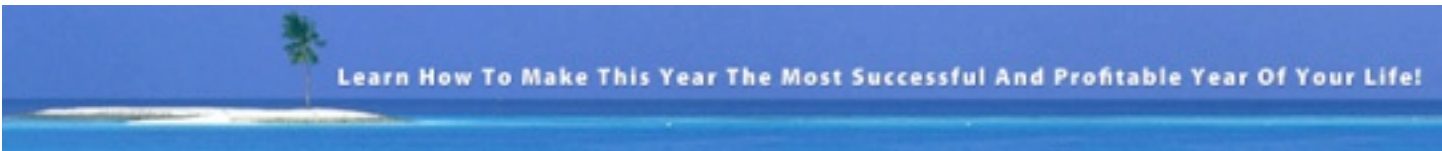
- **Avoid eating and watching TV at the same time**

Mindless eating is just as harmful as mindless TV-viewing, and causes you to eat more - never a good idea, especially when you're addicted to 'veg-ing out' in front of a TV screen and not getting enough exercise.



Obviously, if you're addicted to video games or watching TV on the Internet, it qualifies as excessive viewing, and needs to be addressed. None of these activities is harmful in themselves for reasonable lengths of time. But obsessive-compulsive behavior is a serious problem that greatly reduces the quality of your life. Any challenging activity that replaces long periods of sedentary, mindless or repetitive engagement is always a good alternative.



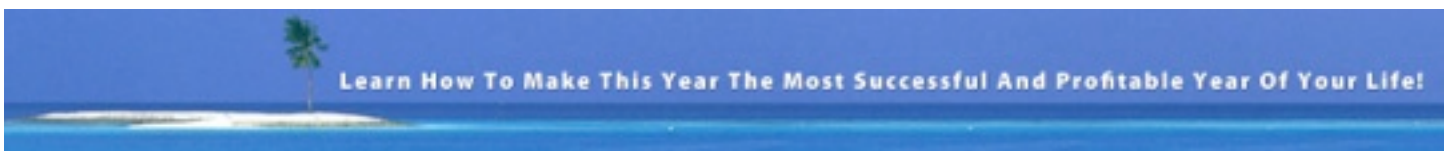


READ AT LEAST TWO NEW BOOKS

"Inquiring minds want to know..." for no other reason than to satisfy their curiosity. The Information Age in which we live offers a vast array of resources for gathering and disseminating knowledge. Technical achievements in telecommunications have made it possible to experience literature in new and innovative ways involving the Internet and mobile devices. The publishing industry, still rooted in sheets of paper bound between two covers, has grown to include desktop publishing, audio books, eBooks, databases, file sharing protocols and devices for wireless downloads. Whatever unforeseen shape books and publishing might take in the future, writing will remain the fundamental source of knowledge. Reading by whatever means or gadget is how we learn things. A "book" is a body of knowledge with a beginning and end, and in the middle we are forced to think.

Why read? In a high-tech world of steaming video, mobile phones with full-length movies and rapid-fire gaming, who reads? The person who reads every day is the one who knows more, writes better, thinks more clearly, uses a better vocabulary, and is more successful than the non-reader at whatever they choose to do. It's as simple as that. Anyone who wants their life to move from so-so and okay to "the best ever" is advised to read as much as possible. Successful people are voracious readers, always in the middle of a book, sometimes in the middle of two or three books at the same time. These people, whether formally educated or not, understand the meaning of the quote:

*"To know that we know what we know,
and to know that we do not know
what we do not know,
that is true knowledge."*



(Nicolas Copernicus, b.1473)

If you, like most people, haven't read a book in the past year, now is an excellent time to start. If you read sporadically, try reading a book a month. The following suggestions are ways to enhance your reading program.

*Read non-fiction regularly. The possibilities are endless and the subjects are limitless. This field of literature ranges from history to space travel, biography, autobiography, how-to and self-improvement books, geography, science, health, religion, politics, cooking, technology, crime, quite literally whatever interests you. Pick a subject, any subject.

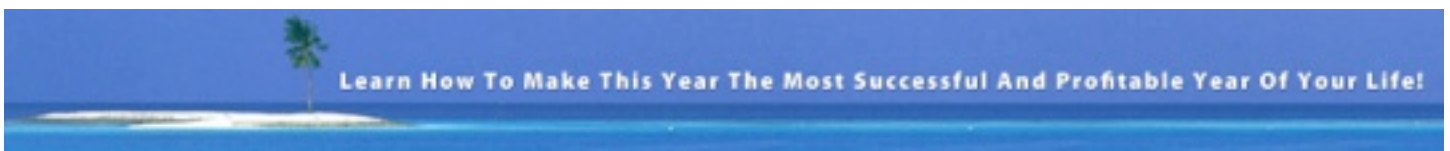
Choose a topic you're not already pursuing. If your hobby is building model trains, you probably have a fine library on the subject. Another book on trains to further your knowledge would never be a bad idea. But try to find a book in a field about which you know little but it's always intrigued you. Study something you really enjoy, something that makes you feel good all over like a wonderful body massage. History, biographies and autobiographies are excellent how-to-books, or how-not-to-books depending on the individual or historical period. Valuable lessons and life blueprints can be gleaned from reading about notable or successful persons and events.

- **Routinely include fiction in your reading program**

A collection of short stories are a good choice if your time is limited or your have a short attention span. Novels provide in-depth exposure to new worlds and social situations. They're thorough studies of character and the circumstances of a character's life. A good novel offers a vista possibly never before seen by the reader. The author draws readers into a special realm and allow them to experience that world on many levels where they gain new insight into the human condition. Plots weave and carry us along, allowing us to mingle with strangers who become our friends, and visit places we've never been but soon learn to call home. Transformative journeys can occur while reading a novel, shaping our thinking and permanently influencing our lives.

- **Use new books**

Newly written, recently published books are an excellent way to get in tune with current thinking. This isn't to undermine or devalue the classics or books published prior to the present year.



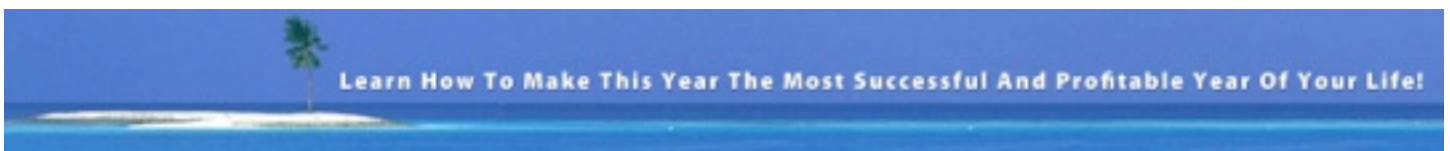
However, most recently published books tend to incorporate latest information, trends and newest ideas and insights, or they'll reflect previous writing by the same author. If the aim is to move forward into a new year and make it better than the last, it helps to be up-to-date and aware of what is happening at the moment. Consult best-seller lists regularly for ideas on what to read next. Publishers, booksellers and newspapers regularly publish lists, particularly at the end of the year, with Top 10 Gift Selections or Top 100 Books of the Year. These are excellent guides to contemporary interests and what other people are reading.

- **Finish a book from beginning to end, no matter how long it takes**

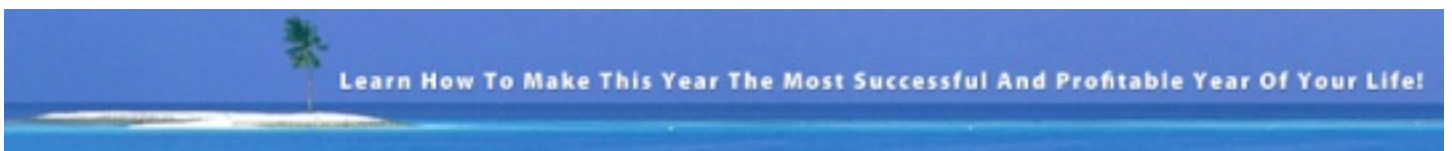
Everyone has books they started and never finished. It happens even to 'the best and the brightest.' But if your bookshelves are crammed with half-read books and they outnumber the ones you've completed, you've got a chronic problem. Granted, some books are not worth finishing. It's not unusual for a book to become incredibly boring and repetitive by chapter 8 and you feel there's little value in continuing. In these cases, it's a good idea to skim to the end and make sure nothing worthwhile lies ahead, before abandoning this book for another.

- **Read for an hour or two and write for an hour or two**

This leads to a fuller understanding of what you've read, helps you assimilate new ideas and incorporate them into your thinking. You could keep a special journal for this purpose, or create a file on your computer. Better yet, read a book and blog about it, or write a review. There's no shortage today for blogging opportunities on news or social networking websites, electronic editions of magazines, as well as your own Internet URL. Internet maven Arianna Huffington's latest book, "Blogging," is a storehouse of everything you ever wanted or will need to know on the subject. Huffington is a good example of someone who has mastered the art of reading and then writing about it. Starting with an inquiring mind and armed with an arsenal of well-honed writing skills, typewriter, computer, laptop, mobile devices and endless notebooks and journals, Huffington has written more than a dozen books and founded The Huffington Post, a news website and bloggers' paradise.



By incorporating reading, and writing, into your routine you'll find you're less bored, a better conversationalist, have new insight into yourself and the world, and generally have improved your life. Start small, think big, and books will lead you to discover innumerable ways to make your life in 2012 the best ever.

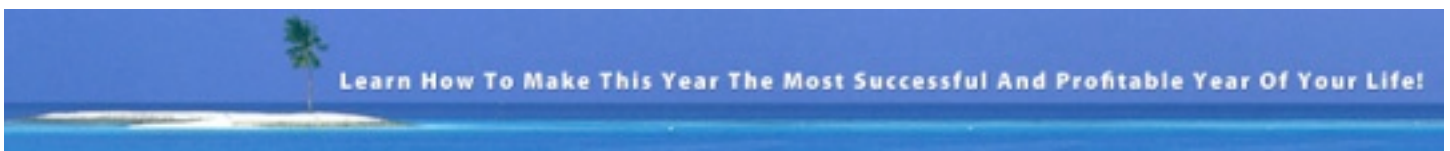


PROCRASTINATE NO LONGER - PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Gratitude has been a focus of religious and spiritual movements for thousands of years. In the past decade, gratitude has become a 'hot' topic in the world of self-improvement and 'the art of healing whatever ails you.' TV mogul Oprah Winfrey has been a strong advocate of the gratitude and testifies to its transformative power. She's continually promoted the writings of Sarah Ban Breathnach and her "Simple Abundance" philosophy. Winfrey and Breathnach both believe unequivocally that the easiest and most fool proof method for bringing abundance into one's life is by daily expressing gratitude.

Gratitude is a slippery concept to grasp. It's far more than a simple "thank you." A good way to get in touch with the meaning of gratitude is simply to make it ritual twice every day - as you're falling asleep and as you awake. At night think of three little things that happened during the day for which you're grateful. First thing in the morning, before you get out of bed, take time to be thankful in advance for three things you've scheduled ahead, or that you anticipate the day might bring. This is most definitely where "Little Things Mean A Lot." It's easy to be grateful for big things. 'I just got a brand new car. Wow, am I thankful!' Winning a multi-million dollar lottery makes everyone grateful. But how often are we thankful for the friendly smile of a stranger or register attendant? Or for finding a good book? Or a friend who unexpectedly drops by with warm cookies? Little things and simple kindnesses occur every day; they're noticed, but seldom acknowledged with sincere gratitude.

Keeping a gratitude journal is a valuable tool that's helped many people feel grateful for the abundance that already exists in their life. Often we're totally focused on getting and having more and more. We're completely oblivious to how much we already have and fail to enjoy what's already here. We want this and we want that, and wonder why we aren't getting it. A good way to get the life we want is to be grateful for the life we have. Writing words of gratitude in a journal gives clarity to thoughts in our head more and helps us organize our thinking. A word spoken or written is far more powerful than a concept floating around aimlessly in the mind. Ideas and notions are wondrous, but putting words on paper gives material form and substance to inner thoughts and feelings.



It's effortless to be grateful when things go well. But how is it possible to be grateful 'when bad things happen to good people?' How can we be grateful for illness, or poverty, or loneliness, or the loss of love? Who can be grateful when they can't pay the mortgage and the garage roof is falling down? Feeling gratitude in bad times is extremely difficult. It requires delving deep into your inner being and finding something, anything for which to be grateful. Thinking positive thoughts and aphorisms are extremely helpful but just repeating them is not enough. You must believe them, and feel them.

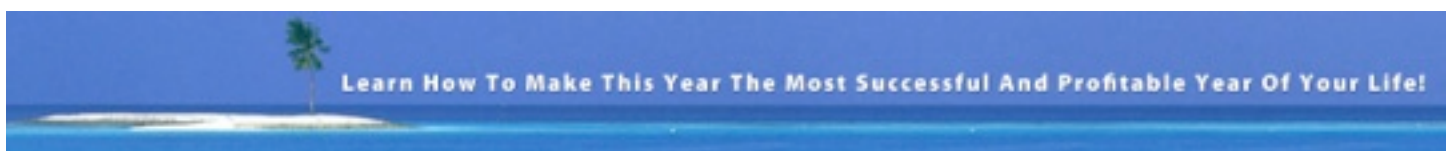
"Every day in every way I'm getting better and better"

(Emile Coue b.1857)

French psychologist Emile Coue is considered by many to be the founder of the present self-improvement and motivational movement. Coue ushered in the idea that healing is possible through auto-suggestion and positive thinking. His theory is at the basis of thousands of self-help, how-to books and motivational systems that have blossomed into a mega-genre since the 1970s. Positive thinking is key to hundreds of programs for success, and its vital to understanding gratitude. The two exist hand-in-hand.

We don't have to look far to find well-known examples of persons who remain positive and grateful in the face of extreme hardship or physical suffering. Actor Christopher Reeve suffered a devastating accident that left him horrifically injured and disabled, paralyzed from the head down. Yet he grew to be thankful for every moment of his life to the very end when he drew his final breath from the tube connected to a machine that breathed for him for nine years. His book, "Nothing Is Impossible," is a testimony to his rare ability despite colossal tragedy to live with enthusiasm and gratitude and not taking life for granted.

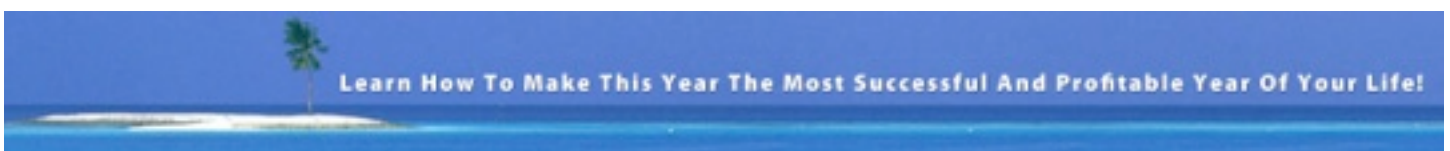
Was Reeve grateful he fell off a horse and permanently damaged his second vertebrae? Hardly. What happened to Reeve wasn't anyone's 'dream come true.' Yet he somehow touch a place inside him where he recognized he was still alive and was truly grateful, despite his limitations. Reeve couldn't reach out and touch his wife and children, yet he was able to reach inside his soul and embrace serenity and gratitude.



Have you ever noticed when successful people are interviewed they usually find an opportunity to interject how lucky they feel they are? A successful woman will say: "I'm so lucky my career allows me to work sporadically and raise my children at the same time." Or a film star who makes \$20 million for one picture will say "I've got the easiest job in the world." Many times you'll hear: "I'm so lucky to be able to do something I love and get paid for it." The issue is not whether some people are luckier than others. The point is successful people seem always to make a point of saying "I'm so lucky." It's their way of expressing their gratitude for their luck and everything it's brought them. The luckiest people seem to always be expressing gratitude...

But what about those who are unsuccessful? Or, those who are suffering an incurable illness, a devastating financial loss, the death of a loved one, or the breakup of a marriage? We all have a choice to see the glass half full or half empty. Focusing on the positive and ignoring the negative is find something for which to be grateful. When the I-don't-have-this tape, or the here's-what's-wrong tape starts playing in your head, it's possible to turn it off and switch to here's-what-I-have and here's-what's-right-in-my life. It takes steady, prolonged discipline to move from being a negative thinker to a grateful person, but in the words of the man we knew and loved as "Superman," nothing is impossible.

Positive thinking and gratitude work together. Everyone is lucky to a degree. Everyone has something for which to be grateful, if nothing more than the opportunity to make 2012 the best year ever.



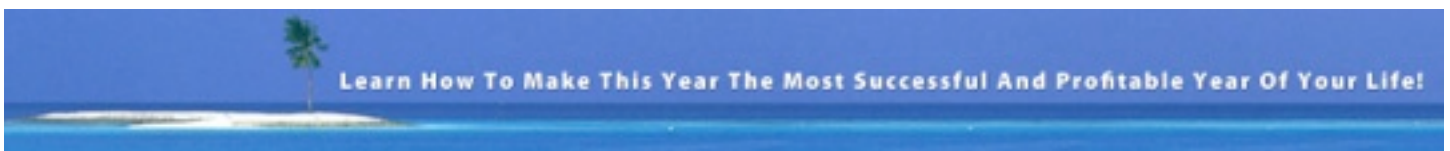
TAKE AN ART CLASS

Continuing education is valuable whether you're a high school graduate, hold multiple PhDs, or just turned 90 years old. Taking an art class - not any class, an art class - yields results like no other study. If you consider yourself more verbal than visual, more right-brain than left-brain, there's an even greater need to study art. Art history classes are important academically and culturally, but the most personal benefit comes from taking an art class that teaches how to produce an object. Learning how to make art, not just appreciating it, teaches an individual to develop artistic skill to the best of their ability. Self-esteem comes from realizing you created a tangible object, something that didn't exist before you made it. When you see that you've contributed a solid object to your environment, and the planet, you're faced with concrete proof of your ability to create change in other areas of your life as well. You also come face to face with the notion of endless possibility, limited only by the imagination.

Everyone is creative. Not everyone is equally endowed with artistic talent, but everyone is born with the ability to create and how to express creativity can be learned. Making art is a skill like any other. It's no different than learning how to tie a shoelace or scale a mountain. Studying art teaches a person to see more completely, to notice things for the first time, to see objects in nature and experience their essence through simple acts of seeing and feeling.

A person who makes art learns how to see 'beauty within the eye of the beholder.' French Impressionist master Pierre-Auguste Renoir was plagued with debilitating rheumatoid arthritis in the final 16 years of his life. He painted from a wheel chair with brushes that his sons tied to his hands with leather straps. With these limitations, Renoir managed to produce his most celebrated work. When questioned how it was possible to produce such masterpieces with severe disability and crippling pain, he replied: *"I paint with my eyes, not my hands."*

To see art and beauty in nature, to identify color, line and shape, is taught in every art class. How to recreate that vision in an object can also be taught and learned. Few will be able to create a masterpiece, but everyone will get closer to their creative spirit by studying art. Making art stretches the imagination and develops self-expression which functions beyond the art experience into other areas of life. Learning to release creativity benefits an individual in whichever profession they work.



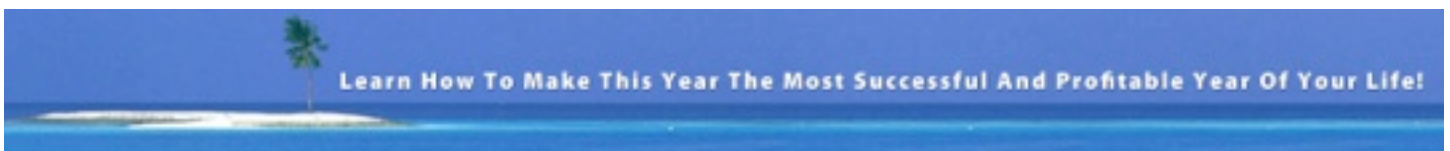
The creative person is needed to solve problems in every job in every industry. Practicing creativity by making art teaches a person "to think 'outside the box,'" a useful skill whether writing computer software, designing a car, or drawing up a financial plan. Creative problem solvers are always in demand.

Painting and drawing classes are most common among beginners. Other media include sculpture, pottery, photography, computer graphics, animation, jewelry design, weaving, stained glass, architecture, calligraphy, lettering, and woodworking. There's something for everyone.

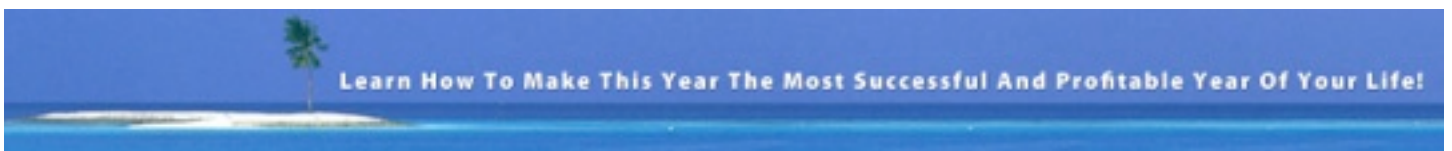
Classes are available at a local college or university, art gallery, museum, or community visual arts center. Most towns have at least one resident who is an amateur artist or art teacher. They're often willing to provide art classes for a small fee. Check networking websites, online communities, and bulletin boards for other group or private instruction.

If you're convinced you're "creatively challenged," start with a kit from an art supply store or hobby shop. You don't have to follow the steps exactly, and you probably won't create a replica of what's on the cover, at least in the beginning. You might even create a model airplane with two wings on one side. Of course it won't fly, but it will be interesting. Another option is to experiment with "paint by number" kits. You might enjoy the discipline of following the numbers exactly. Or half way through the painting, you might decide to totally paint outside the lines and end up with a beautiful work of abstract art.

Art projects primarily involve creating something from nothing, making an object from scratch using a variety of purchased or found materials. Artistic skills can also be used to repair personal or household items. Perhaps a necklace only needs a steady hand and pair of pliers to make it wearable, or a pair of eyeglasses without a temple piece might only need a new screw. Many wobbly chair legs have been fixed with the proper glue and a clamp. Painting a room isn't a bothersome chore when seen through the eye of a creative person. A few skills and a little confidence are enough to tackle the job and produce beautiful results.



Using your creative and artistic abilities to repair damage and create beauty in your surroundings produces continual rewards and lasting satisfaction. Being able to create a beautiful home environment or paint a watercolor to hang on a wall builds confidence that extends to other areas of a person's life and touches personal, family and business relationships on every level. Fixing and beautifying little things often results in bigger things taking care of themselves with the best possible results.



CONCLUSION

Making any year the best ever is not an easy task under the best circumstances. Drastic and monumental changes are sometimes needed to overcome adversity.

At the end of 2008, the United States faced financial instability, failing banks and major corporations, record mortgage foreclosures, dwindling retirement accounts and the loss of 2 million jobs over the past year. It would seem the most to aim for would be mere survival. But "just getting by" is never an attractive or challenging goal. Even when achieved, 'getting by' doesn't feel like a reward.

Making this year 'the best year ever' is not only possible, it's do-able. Obstacles can be exciting and thrilling, or they can be turn-offs and excuses for failure. It's up to the individual.

The person most likely to succeed is the one who asks: Why not go for it? Why not saddle up and sit back for what could be a fascinating ride?

Recognizing the country's shaky economy, the suggestions offered here require little if any funding. Most suggestions are ordinary, common sense methods for self-improvement. The theme has been to suggest experiments with gradual lifestyle changes, in the belief that little things changed consistently eventually flourish into massive improvement.

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

(Confucius b. 551 BC)

May every step you take move you closer to your best year ever!

