New Year Always Brings a Desire for Improvement

Resolutions for the new year. We make them every year. We break them every year.

TIME magazine's list of the 10 most commonly made (and commonly broken) resolutions are:

- Lose weight and get fit
  Quit smoking
  Learn something new
  Eat healthier and diet
  Get out of debt and save money
  Spend more time with family
  Travel to new places
  Be less stressed
  Volunteer
  Drink less

Going off this list, it's easy to see we all generally want the same things in life. We all desire to feel better, to do things that fulfill us and to spend time with the ones we love. Forgive me for the clichés, but life is finite. Our time on Earth is fleeting. All of us are dying, every day a little more.

So it make sense we would want to feel our best, look our best and do our best with the time we have.

We make these resolutions, and we keep them for a month. A month, maybe. Then the old ways set in, the holidays are over. The sense of rejuvenation that comes from a new calendar year fades. Reality returns. The practicality of life, of career and time, prove too great to overcome.

The noble notions such as volunteering more or spending time with others give way to the projects at work. Less stress is actually near unattainable in the world we have created. There

are reasons for every other resolution on the list to fail. But why get into those and cast pessimism on your new life before you even make your resolution?

Rather, I offer other solutions, rules that could help you in your daily life. I've written before about Thomas Jefferson's 10 rules. Not 10 Commandments, those being the laws of God passed down to Moses and then on to man, but rather 10 points of perspective to guide one through difficult situations and ways to respond when obstacles cross your path.

Jefferson's 10 Rules for leading a fulfilling life:

1. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
2. Never trouble another for what you can do yourself.
3. Never spend your money before you have it.
4. Never buy what you do not want, because it is cheap; it will be dear to you.
5. Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst and cold.
6. We never repent of having eaten too little.
7. Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.
8. How much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened.
9. Take things always by their smooth handle. (Jefferson believed strongly that the exchange of ideas must always be civil)
10. When angry, count ten, before you speak; if very angry, a hundred.

These rules are timeless guidelines of the way to lead a fulfilling life. If I may be so bold, I'd like to add a few more of my own. I try to do the following each day. Sometimes I fail (lots of times I fail, actually), but I promise myself every day that I will succeed.

1. Take the time to plan and prioritize – keep a list every day of what you have to do and what is most important. If you feel overwhelmed, pick the most important thing and do it first. Then move downward. If you can't get it all done in a single day, move it to the next. But do your best to achieve your daily agenda. After all, remember Jefferson's rule: Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today. Question is, can you do it today?

2. Assume people have good intentions – this is tough for me. By nature, I'm not a very trusting person. But you must realize that everyone has their own problems, their own fears, their own

concerns in dealings both personally and professionally. You aren't a mind reader; so don't input your own thoughts into their motives. Deal professionally. Deal politely. Have tact in all things.

3. Find the positive in every situation – this is a resolution I made earlier in the year and thus far I have been keeping it. Now this does not apply to tragedy. There's nothing positive to take from the school shootings in Connecticut. However, we can find positivity in adversity. Take your problem, analyze your dread, your fear, your anxiety, your anger. Are they justified? If so, consider your options, consider your course. Somewhere in there is a positive.

4. End each day with thanks and appreciation – your day couldn't have been all bad. Something good must have happened, even it was small. Remember that great things can have humble beginnings. Thank God for the day you were given.

Several years ago, I was talking to a friend about the kind of person I wanted to be. I remember telling him I just wanted to be the kind of man God wants me to be.

His reply was simple. "Well, just get out of His way."

I'm not an expert on life. Nor am I a motivational speaker or author. I'm just a regular guy trying to do his best in life and raise my children the best way I know how. I do know the kind of man I want to be, and I strive to become that man. Following steps like the ones listed above can help me, can help all of us, become the kind of person God wants us to be.

Happy New Year to you and yours. Make your resolutions. I hope you keep them.

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