



MANAGING THOUGHT
A WAY OF LIVING TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL AND BUSINESS SUCCESS

▶ **ForwardThinking** Gentle Reminder



Brought to you by Managing Thought as a gentle reminder about the power of focused thinking to help you achieve long-lasting success in work and life.

Volume 3

How to Make Resolutions You Can Keep

Mark Twain said, "Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual."

Often, it seems no matter how motivated we are by our resolutions, we go back to the way we were. For many of us, this happens year after year and some of us have gotten to the point where we don't even bother to make resolutions. We say life happens, we don't have will power, or we lack discipline. Thankfully, these are NOT the reasons our resolutions don't work. They don't work because they are not inspired. This gentle reminder offers some guidance to help you reformulate your resolutions in order to keep them and achieve long-lasting success.

There are a number of reasons our resolutions don't work. We create a state of perfection that we haven't even defined in our minds, and set goals which have no real meaning to us, usually focused on what we don't want. Then we judge and criticize ourselves when we have strayed from our goal. At the end of the day we take stock of the weight we didn't lose, the things we ate that were bad for us, the cigarettes we smoked that we shouldn't have, the exercise we didn't do, the time we didn't spend with our family etc. We do not feel the power of any sense of accomplishment because if we are not exercising *five* times each week, for example, then we have not achieved our goal. We feel badly. After a few days of this, we believe we have failed. We lose momentum. When we are in states of blame, judgment, criticism, and negativity, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish what is significant and of value to us. We begin a downward spiral and there goes the resolution!

Here's a process and some tools to help you formulate inspired resolutions, and achieve significant results and long term success.

1. Take a moment to reflect.

Reflection is an action, a very powerful action. With paper and pen in hand, go to a comfortable and inspiring place and reflect.

Reflect on Your Past

When we take a moment to reflect, without blame or judgment, and in a state of wonder, on significant events, triumphs, and challenges we experienced during the year or during our lives, we often discover we've accomplished so much more than we give ourselves credit for. We discover how much strength we have and we see the values



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we embody. We realize the valuable lessons we have learned. **As you reflect, take note of the ideas you receive on how to build upon and expand these strengths, accomplishments and, learnings.**

When we reflect on how we spent our time and money, on what and who influenced us (the economy, a friend, family, a book, an advisor, fear, worry, creativity, inspiration...), and what happened with our relationships, we discover we have been in alignment with what truly matters – or not. **Take note of the ideas you receive how to move forward in a meaningful way that serves your purpose.**

Reflect on Your Present

To reflect on where you are right now, take the free [How Do Your Thoughts Rule Your World? ® self-assessment](#) (you can print and save your results, and remind yourself to take it again in four to six weeks to see what's changed.) Take the assessment without judgment and criticism, in a state of wonder. **As you take the assessment, notice the ideas that pop into your head telling you where you are not in alignment with what matters to you. Jot down notes on what you want to focus on in the coming year.**

Reflect on Your Reflections

When we step back, reflect upon the reflections, and notice what we are thankful for, we become truly inspired—in touch with our highest awareness and creativity. Our vision and purpose becomes clear and we begin to formulate resolutions.

2. Focus on what you want, not what you don't want.

Most of us frame our resolutions in terms of what we don't want or can't have. Resolutions to quit smoking, lose weight, be more balanced, reduce stress, and getting rid of debt, are actually focused on what we don't want, or can't have—not inspiring!

Let's look at the resolutions to quit smoking or to lose weight for example. The resolutions themselves are focused on what I don't want - smoking and excess weight. And, as I face each day, I am focused on not smoking or not eating bad foods which instructs my brain to look for and point out to me all cigarettes I can't have and the food I am not supposed to eat. We are torturing ourselves. Then at the end of the day, I berate myself for the cigarettes and bad food I did have and for my lack of will power. Again, I am instructing my brain to notice what I did wrong. It will not notice anything I did right. Because that wasn't the instruction! Now I'm a failure. I am not in a state of joy or gratitude or vision and possibility (which brings about transformation) and the downward spiral continues.



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Resolutions of being healthy, enjoying life, choosing peace, and increasing wealth or cash flow, instruct our brains to focus us on what we want and work with us, not against us.

In the process of refining our resolutions, we begin to feel inspired.

Let's say, in this process, for example, you discover that you don't really want to quit smoking and that smoking brings you peace and inspires you. In this instance, ask yourself what smoking brings you to get to the essence of what you want. You may discover that it gives you the opportunity to re-center yourself or to reflect, to have some quiet time, to get outside, to connect with friends, etc. You may then discover that it is not smoking that brings you these valuable opportunities - it is taking a break that does. What you really want is to take breaks.

By discovering the essence of what we really want, we re-discover ourselves and what is true to us. It is when we are true to ourselves that we become inspired. Often times our resolutions are based on what we think we are *supposed to do* or *have to do* or *should do*, which is not what *we truly want*.

So take a look at your resolutions and see how you can re-frame them to reflect what *you* want. Then say them out loud several times and notice how you feel. You either feel right or you don't. Keep saying them out loud and making adjustments to the resolutions until they are truly yours, until you feel, "This is me, this is possible, this is my new story."

For more on this, take a look at my Forward Thinking™ Reminder [Focus on What You Want, Not What You Don't Want](#).

3. Describe the ripple effect – the difference you're making by fulfilling your resolution.

We are all about contributing and making a difference. Keep asking yourself, "What does this bring me?" and "What does this bring others?" until you see and feel the difference you make in your life and the lives of others by fulfilling your resolution. For example, if I ask, "What does health bring me?" I may say, "I am able to play and enjoy activities with my kids." When I ask what that brings me, I may say, "I have fun and bond with my kids. They feel safe to talk with me. Then I can fulfill my vision of being a guide and mentor to them which helps them in their lives."

When I re-frame my resolution to include the ripple effect, then my resolution is meaningful to me, and I become inspired.



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4. Tell the story.

When we can tell the story of how we are fulfilling the resolution, and we're inspired, that's when we become energized and receive all kinds of ideas on how to fulfill our resolution.

For example, it may not be enough to resolve health. Just resolving health can be overwhelming. Without a definition of health, I can feel that health is unattainable. Or it can be underwhelming - if I don't know what health means or looks like, it's hard to feel motivated to do anything. So first I define to myself what health looks like and means to me. I may decide that health means making good eating choices, exercising (or moving) regularly, and having peace of mind. Then I can expand and describe what making good eating choices, moving regularly, and having peace of mind looks like and means to me. I may then be inspired to list the foods I want to eat (vegetables, green tea, whole grains), movement I want to do (walking, dancing, yoga, hula hooping, P90X!), and what I can do that brings me peace (breathe, a thankfulness journal, practicing managing thought). I keep adding detail until I get to the point where I feel a click – it feels real and it feels possible. For more on this, download the free [PrioriTree™ Worksheets](#) to help you decide what you want, and set your intentions and action plans in a powerful way.

5. Focus on the NOW.

You may remember from the [Managing Thought book](#) or [workshop DVD](#) that there is no such thing as the future, that the future is an illusion. What we do have is a NOW followed by a NOW followed by a whole lot of NOWs. We do not suddenly become bankrupt. We have a series of bankrupt NOW moments. We do not suddenly become a great leader or a great parent or healthy. We have a series of great leader or great parent or healthy NOW moments. And it's the same with accomplishing a goal or fulfilling a resolution. It doesn't suddenly happen. It's a series of NOW moments and the resolution is fulfilled when we have achieved a critical mass of these NOW moments!

To focus on the NOW, prepare powerful questions (focused on what you want) to ask yourself: What can I eat right now that's healthy? How can I move today? What can I do that brings me peace in this moment? What one day each week can I eat healthy? (Then I'm 1/7 of the way there!) What one meal can I eat each day that's healthy? (Then I'm 1/3 of the way there!) Or I can make Monday movement day and Tuesday is healthy eating day and Wednesday is peace of mind day. (And then I'm half way there!)

6. Acknowledge your progress and do do-overs.

When you catch yourself thinking, saying, or doing something contrary to your resolution, don't blame or judge or criticize yourself. That accomplishes nothing and actually works against you. Instead, simply do it over, and re-think,



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re-say, or re-do it the way you intend. You are giving your brain and body a new script. And the more often your brain rehearses these new thoughts and actions, the sooner your brain starts focusing on presenting you with your new thoughts and actions--automatically.

At the end of the day, when we take stock of how we did, it doesn't matter that we didn't exercise five times. It does matter that we exercised once. That is a NOW moment to be recognized and celebrated toward our goal. It does not matter that we smoked or ate bad things today. It does matter that we are aware of the choices and that we made one or more healthy choices. It's the slow gradual changes that are lasting.

Include in your resolution a daily process or ritual to reflect on the day and celebrate or acknowledge the NOW moments you were successful or that you were aware of your choices. When we are thankful and acknowledge the progress we have made, no matter how small, we become inspired and we receive ideas on how to expand and rise to the next level.

As Lao-Tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins in a single step." I invite you to make just one small change each week. These very small NOW changes add up to big changes over a year and significant change for a lifetime.

May your thoughts bring you peace and inspire you.

MANAGING THOUGHT

Mary

Mary J. Lore
Founder and President



Mary J. Lore is the founder and president of Managing Thought, LLC, which helps individuals and organizations develop self-awareness and change how they think and conduct business to attain long-lasting success. She is an internationally recognized leader, public speaker, executive mentor, and author of the award-winning book [Managing Thought: Think Differently. Think Powerfully. Achieve New Levels of Success.](#) and audio book [Managing Thought: How Do Your Thoughts Rule Your World?](#) Mary also serves as an expert resource for Vistage International, also known as TEC, the world's preeminent organization for the personal and professional development of CEOs. Information on books, keynotes, workshops, DVDs, coaching, e-columns, podcasts, and on-line tools can be found at www.managingthought.com.