

# Staying centered in the new year

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*Spirit of Life*

In years past, I might have already made the call by now (mid-January) that my New Year's resolutions were a bust. Idealism has, from time to time, gotten the better of me.

## *Spirit of Life*

I have fallen into the trap of many who try to undertake too much too fast. Like the year I resolved to get up early and begin each day with an hour of meditation! It turns out that this goal may have been overly ambitious for someone who doesn't like to get up early and finds meditation challenging. I could just as easily have added underwater ballet to my repertoire of spiritual practices!

Over the years, I've learned to be more realistic in my goal setting, at the same time as I've liberated myself from the expectation of having to make a significant shift in my life just because the calendar tells me to. Not being compelled to make New Year's resolutions, for example, frees me to



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choose in my own way how I want to live intentionally throughout the year. This year, I'm trying on the practice of discerning a word to use as a mantra throughout the year. My word for 2023 is "gratitude," and I hope it calls me back again and again to my intention to center gratitude in my life. In other words, when things aren't going great, I want to shift my focus to what I'm grateful for (and there is always something). So far, so good. In fact, when I respond, "I'm grateful" to the ubiquitous question "How are you?" I notice that I'm actually and genuinely feeling more gratitude (as well as other good things).

Centering is an impor-

tant practice in many spiritual traditions for good reason. In language trendy in most business/management schools, we live our lives in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world. When things are constantly in flux and largely out of our control, we need to be able to ground and center ourselves in order to access our own wisdom and stay true to our highest values. Centering can not only keep us sane, it can also provide us with perspective and an awareness of resources, both of which are necessary to make good choices.

So, how might we stay centered this year? Breathing is good practice when we pay attention to it — it's also an easy choice since we have to do it anyway. Having a mantra can be helpful, too. Maybe it's a word, like "compassion" or "well-being"; maybe it's a phrase we need to remember, like "do unto others" or "don't be a jerk." Being in community is also good practice — we do better when we are in relationship with others who share our values and are willing to hold us accountable. The

list of things we could do to center ourselves is only limited by our imagination.

If you want to center and are unsure where to start, these questions might help you focus your intent: What centering practices work for you? What brings you back to yourself when you find yourself getting lost in other people's expectations (or your own nonsense)? What reminds you of your values and priorities when the calendar itself seems oppressive with its demands? To what foundation do you need to return (i.e. the passion that got you started on, the path you're now on, your own dreams, aspirations long forgotten, lessons learned that have enhanced your life, etc.)? What do you need (and from whom) to support your best efforts this year?

Whether you made resolutions or not, whether they are working out or not, it is not too late to focus some energies on staying centered in the coming year.

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