Reflections on a New Year: How to Become Your Best Self

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THREE PARTS TO THIS WEBINAR:

1. Setting Your Goals
2. What is Getting in Your Way?
3. How Can You Overcome These Barriers?
Part 1: Setting Your Goals
Poll #1

When you think about a new year, what would you most like to change in your life?

• Your feelings about yourself?
• Your addictions?
• Your career track?
• Your relationships?
• Taking better care of yourself?
What Does Living the Good Life Mean to You?

• Being happy with yourself?
• Being happy in a relationship?
• Being fulfilled in work (financially or personally?)
• Giving to others?
• Achieving “fame and fortune?”
Exercise 1.1: Visualizing the Real You

- My physical abilities:
- My positive qualities:
- My interests and activities:
- My long-term goals:
- My short-term goals:
- Where do I stand in relation to my goals?
Part 2:

What is Getting in Your Way?
Poll #2
What is getting in your way?

• Yourself?
• Others?
• Circumstances?
“Seek not good from without: seek it within yourselves or you will never find it.”

- Epictetus

What does “Living the Good Life” Mean to You?
SEPARATION THEORY

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

- The concept of the Fantasy Bond
- The concept of the Critical Inner Voice
The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior. This internal enemy fosters inwardness, distrust, self-criticism, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities. The critical inner voice effects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships, and our performance and accomplishments at school and work.
"Bad dog'? Please don't label me, Carl."
I'll leave you alone with your thoughts, she said. How cruel.
Bloom County

I'm probably five pounds heavier. This is so depressing.

Five pounds lighter! Just like that! Without even trying! How 'bout that?

I probably have cancer. This is so depressing.
### Common “Critical Inner Voices”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About Yourself:</th>
<th>About Your Relationship:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You’re stupid.</td>
<td>He doesn’t really care about you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re unattractive.</td>
<td>She is too good for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re not like other people.</td>
<td>You’re better off on your own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re a failure.</td>
<td>Don’t be too vulnerable, or you’ll just wind up getting hurt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About Your Career:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who do you think you are? You’ll never be successful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re under too much pressure. You can’t take it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ll never get everything done. You’re so lazy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one appreciates you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poll #3:

How many of you have experienced any of these “voices?”
**Exercise 1.3: Keeping a Journal: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You**

- My critical inner voice as “you” statements
- The real me as “I” statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My critical inner voice as “you” statements</th>
<th>The real me as “I” statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: “You’re so stupid.”</td>
<td>Example: “Sometimes I struggle with work, but I catch on quickly and then usually do a good job.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ways We Get Stuck

- Idealization of parents and family
- Maintenance of a negative self-image
- Projection of negative parental qualities and behaviors onto others
POLL #4:

Which of these causes you the most trouble?

- Idealization of parents and family?
- Maintenance of a negative self-image?
- Projection of negative parental qualities and behaviors onto others?
Overt Negative Power: characterized by aggressive tendencies and is exercised through the use of force and/or coercion to control others. It can be manifested within a relationship or become a significant part of a political or social movement.
Covert Negative Power: based on passive-aggression and expressed in behaviors indicating weakness, incompetence and self-destructive tendencies that manipulate others in the interpersonal world by arousing their feelings of fear, guilt and anger. The exercise of covert negative power through subtle manipulations may be even more destructive in interpersonal relationships than direct force as a means of controlling others.
Three Types of Power

Personal Power: based on strength, confidence, and competence that individuals gradually acquire in the course of their development. Personal power represents a movement toward self-realization and transcendent goals in life; its primary aim is mastery of self, not others.
THREE STATES OF FANTASY INVOLVEMENT

• The individual with extreme propensities for fantasy and imagined fusion who moves toward increased isolation and withdrawal from other people.

• The individual who, to varying degrees, uses elements of reality to reinforce and support an ongoing fantasy process rather than really investing in relationships and career.

• The individual who lives a realistic committed life, whose actions correspond to his or her aspirations and abilities.
## Inward vs. Outward Lifestyle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inward Lifestyle</th>
<th>Outward Lifestyle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypercritical attitudes toward self</td>
<td>Lack of self-consciousness; realistic self-appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigidity</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using substances &amp; routines as painkillers to avoid feeling</td>
<td>Facing up to pain and anxiety with appropriate affect and response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-denial</td>
<td>Self-fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow focus</td>
<td>Searching for meaning and transcending goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INWARD LIFESTYLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>OUTWARD LIFESTYLE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Social involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passivity; victimized</td>
<td>Active; assertive orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking a merged identity and fusion</td>
<td>Maintaining a separate identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting off or withdrawal of emotion; impersonal relating</td>
<td>Feeling state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking gratification in fantasy</td>
<td>Goal-directed behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-denial; self-destructiveness</td>
<td>Self-fulfillment; self-affirmation</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Poll #5:

How many of you feel that you live an outward versus inward lifestyle?
PART 3:

How Can We Overcome These Barriers?
Curious

Open

Accepting

Loving
Poll #6:

How many of you have this attitude toward yourself?
Daniel Siegel, M.D. – Interpersonal Neurobiology
9 Important Functions of the Pre-Frontal Cortex

1. Body Regulation
2. Attunement
3. Emotional Balance
4. Response Flexibility
5. Empathy
6. Self-Knowing Awareness (Insight)
7. Fear Modulation
8. Intuition
9. Morality
EXERCISE 1.4: A PLAN FOR ACTION

- Actions dictated by my critical inner voice
  Examples:
  “Have another piece of cake.”
  “You should just be on your own.”
  “You can’t trust anyone, so don’t get too close.”

- Actions to take that reflect the real me
  Examples:
  “I want to eat healthy and take care of myself.”
  “I don’t want to be isolated and will seek out friends”
  “I want to stay vulnerable in my close relationships.”
Coping with Anger, Avoid Passivity, and a victimized Point of View

“Reject your sense of injury and the injury itself disappears”
- Marcus Aurelius, Meditations
Don’t Play the Victim
Be An Active Participant
in Your Life

• Assume responsibility for your life

• Give up victimized language and thinking

• Avoid the use of passive aggression to get what you want
Withholding

What does it look like?

- Holding back positive qualities
- Feeling victimized or consumed by others

![Image of two children sharing an ice cream]

[The Glendon Association logo]
Poll #7:

How many of you notice ways that you are withholding?
1. Giving something that is sensitive to the person. It’s not about material things. It’s about being giving of yourself.
2. Be open to the person expressing appreciation.
3. Be open to receiving the generosity of others. It’s important to let others do things for you.
4. Showing appreciation for the generosity directed toward you.
**Compassion:** The ability to feel with another; to be sympathetic, tenderhearted. Compassion is a caring stance toward the distressful emotional experience of another person. Compassion may depend on mirror neuron systems, which evoke an emotional state in us that mirrors that of another person, enabling us to feel another person’s pain.

**Empathy:** Understanding the internal experience of another person; the imaginative projection of one’s consciousness into the feelings of another person or object; sympathetic understanding. This is a cognitively complex process that involves mental capacities to imagine the mind of another. Empathy may depend on the capacity for mind sight, mediated by the integrated right hemisphere and prefrontal regions of the brain.
**Mindsight:** The capacity to “see,” or imagine, the mind of oneself or another, enabling an understanding of behavior in terms of mental processes. Other synonyms for this process are “mentalizing,” “theory of the mind,” “mind reading,” and “reflective function.”
Practices of Integrative Communication

- **Awareness.** Be mindful of your own feelings and bodily responses and others’ nonverbal signals.

- **Attunement.** Allow your own state of mind to align with that of another.

- **Empathy.** Open your mind to sense another’s experience and point of view.

- **Expression.** Communicate your internal responses with respect; make the internal external.

- **Joining.** Share openly in the give-and-take of communication, both verbally and nonverbally.

- **Clarification.** Help make sense of the experience of another.

- **Sovereignty.** Respect the dignity and separateness of each individual’s mind.
Poll #8:

Do you feel you can now use these practices of integrative communication?
People Can Learn: Learning Ethical Behaviors

• develop an inclusive world view.

• develop transcendent goals, to value people with different customs and beliefs, and embrace justness, fairness, and equal opportunity for all.

• handle aggression appropriately without externalizing it or internalizing it.

• all feelings are acceptable, but actions require both reality and moral considerations.

• war and violence are not inevitable. The best hope for peace is proper education in psychological principles which leads to ethical behaviors. Dedication to this goal must be coupled with the belief that peace is achievable. Conversely, if one believes that war is inevitable, war becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
Guidelines for Continued Personal Development

- Be Aware of the Fear That Accompanies Change
- Realize That Psychological Pain is Valid
- Develop a More Realistic View of Your Parents
- Differentiation – Unlearn Old Behaviors, Learn New Behaviors
- Become More Aware of Specific Defenses Against Feeling
- Recognize the Value of Friendship
- Seek Your Own Personal Meaning in Life
Dimensions of a Meaningful Life

- Further developing one’s capacity for love, empathy and compassion: Learning to give and accept love
- Formulating one’s own values and ethical principles
- Developing more integrity, honesty, generosity, independence, tolerance and inclusiveness
- Formulating and taking action to achieve meaningful goals in life
- Transcendent goals
- Composing a coherent life story or narrative
A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security."

- Albert Einstein
RESOURCES: BOOKS

Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links
**UPCOMING WEBINARS:**

Next CE Webinar for Professionals:

Overcoming the Fear of Intimacy (CE)
Tuesday, January 11
11 am – 1 pm PST
Price: $25
Register: www1.gotomeeting.com/register/791703401

Next Free Webinar for the Public:

Overcoming the Fear of Intimacy,
Tuesday, February 8
11 am – 12 pm PST
Free
Register: www1.gotomeeting.com/register/953202689

All upcoming webinars can be found at www.glendon.org
Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice Workshop
at Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California

Weekend of January 14-16, 2011, Earn 10 CE’s

www.esalen.org