

A New Year. A New You?

Reflections from a Coaching Perspective

by Karen Staib Duffy

Anytime is a good time to declare a “new year” and begin anew. In planning a career and enjoying one’s life, deeper reflection and self-awareness are the critical starting point. I invite you to carve out some time for yourself and consider where you are and where you want to go next.

We train professionally for the challenges of our careers. We have plans and goals. We are very busy, morning ‘til night. In our culture, we tend to think of life as a straight arrow, rising without interruption in a steady progression. But life is messy. Careers and life are full of unexpected bumps and loops that challenge our assumptions about who we are and what our capabilities are.

In an economy that is strong and growing, we assume that our success is largely the result of our own actions and abilities. In an economy that is shrinking and struggling, even our best abilities may be insufficient for the moment.

I wish to emphasize for the moment, because the unexpected offers us an opportunity to regroup and reconsider. “A teachable moment,” as educators say. It is a time to witness the boundaries of ourselves as persons and grow beyond them with new learning and innovation. This is especially important if you are wrestling with something for which you have no immediate answer. This is the time when you declare yourself a beginner in a particular matter and look to others who may offer you a different perspective, a new insight, or a way of being that can guide your way.

Answers in coaching flow from questions. The questions at right can be focused equally on business or personal situations. They are closely intertwined. You may spend as little or as much time on each question as you wish.

After answering these questions, imagine that you are stepping back from today and fast forwarding to the end of your life, whenever that might be. From this new vantage point, see yourself turning around. Look back to your life today, as it is right now. In light of your major goals in life and your answers to the questions above, what is the most important change you can make or begin for the new year?

Declare your intention to make or begin this change.

Do it. Start it NOW. ■

Ask Yourself:

- What are your major goals in life and in your career?
- What has this past year been like for you?
- What successes have come your way?
- What continuing challenges remain for you?
- What works in your life now?
- With regard to past events, are you accepting or resentful? (Accepting does not mean liking it. It just means that you accept it as it was.)
- With regard to your present situation, are you accepting or resentful?
- When you think about the future, are you ambitious or resigned?
- What drains you of energy?
- Where do you find your strength?
- What activities make your heart sing?
- Where do you find meaning and purpose in your life and in your work?
- Where are the moments of joy to balance the sorrows?
- Where do you find beauty and a sense of peace?
- What’s missing for you?

An alumna, Karen Staib Duffy, MBA '78, is an executive coach and founder of Quantum Development Coaching. She honed her skills as a manager and strategic coach in the corporate arena. An innovative leader and people developer, her experience includes over 25 years in management, capital markets, sales and marketing, risk management, and business and product development. Karen is certified as an Ontological Coach through Newfield Network – Coaching for Professional and Personal Mastery, and is a Professional Certified Coach with the International Coach Federation. Karen has been a featured speaker on emotional intelligence, language and leadership, and the competitive advantages of corporate coaching. She has a B.A. from Northwestern University. Karen is also the Regional Managing Director for Illinois with Korn/Ferry Coaching and Development. She coaches both individual and corporate clients. Karen may be contacted directly at 312-664-6979 or kesduffy@hotmail.com, or see the web site at www.qdcoaching.com.

