

WHERE HAVE I BEEN, WHERE AM I GOING?

by Deb Elkin, LPC

(This article was originally written in 1999 as we entered the new millenium. While it is somewhat dated because of that, the information inside is still valuable in helping you look at yourself and assess where you are and where you are going in your life. And if you did set goals for yourself at the beginning of this new millenium, it is a good time to reflect back and evaluate how you have done and where you would now like to go.)

It is once again that time of year when we look back on what we have done with our lives over the past year. This year however, with the millenium coming to a close, we are provided with a special opportunity to reflect back on the course of our lives as a whole. It is a wonderful opportunity to take an honest look at ourselves, at who we are, at who we've become, and at what we've done with our lives.

The ending of this millenium and the beginning of a new one is very symbolic and provides us with a unique opportunity to pause, get a fresh perspective on our lives, and decide how we want to move forward. It is a time to look at the lessons that our past has taught us and see how we want to let them positively influence us in the future.

Taking the time to reflect in this way is a great gift to yourself. I really want to encourage you to create the time and space to do it. You can journal about it, giving yourself as much time as you need to let it unfold. Or you may want to explore it and discuss it with your partner or a friend. You could even let it be a theme for a New Year's celebration –sharing with a community of friends what you've learned, what you're proud of, what you regret, and what you hope for yourself in the future. That can be a very powerful way of manifesting!

One word of caution before you begin. There may be a saboteur lurking in the form of your internal critic. Your inner critic will be quick to point out what you haven't accomplished, where you are lacking, what you are not doing right or good enough, or how you don't stack up to so-and-so. And we all have one. So listen out for its voice and when those judgmental comments creep into your thoughts – and they will! – acknowledge them ie “I hear you”, and then tell them, “Not now. I'll pay attention to you too (because they do have valuable information for us), but not now.” If it helps, imagine putting them in some type of container on a shelf and every time a new one creeps back in, open the lid and toss it in.

The possibilities of questions to ponder and reflect on are many. I offer these as a guide. What's important is that you make this relevant and important to you. This first group has to do with what you are proud of or pleased with about yourself:

- ◆ What have you accomplished that you feel good about?
- ◆ What are you proud of?

- ◆ What do you appreciate about the person you have become?
- ◆ What do you like about yourself?
- ◆ What do you value about yourself?
- ◆ What is working in your life?

The second group includes regrets and dissatisfactions as well as the unfinished business in your life. (This is where the internal critic usually shows up, so again, I encourage you to actively pay attention to its presence, and put it in its container when it shows up.) Regrets and dissatisfactions are not bad things. They are what we learn from and how we grow and make changes. Choose to see them as important information for your future learning and growth rather than hearing them as a litany of what's wrong with you. (That is how you integrate your inner critic and use the information it is providing you in a positive way.) From that perspective, consider:

- ◆ What is missing in your life?
- ◆ What is not working in your life?
- ◆ What do you not like about the person you have become?
- ◆ What are your regrets?
- ◆ Who do you need to forgive?
- ◆ In what ways do you need to forgive yourself?

This is a wonderful opportunity to “start anew”, to make the changes in the ways you have been living your life. I remember the powerful impact it had on me the first time I saw the poster, “Today is the first day of the rest of your life.” Let that be your truth. Let the start of this new year, this new millennium, be a new beginning. Let the lessons from your past be guides for how you want to live the rest of your life.

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