



## COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### Creating Lasting New Year's Resolutions

*"It takes courage to grow up and become who you truly are." ~ e. e. cummings*

New Year's Resolutions have existed for thousands of years; the tradition is shared by multiple religions around the world. The similarity among all of them is a dedication, once a year, to better oneself (physically, morally/ethically, emotionally, and mentally).

Unfortunately, research shows that today only 8% of us keep our resolutions. This "sets us up" for failure and disappointment. How can we keep with tradition, but also keep to our resolutions and feel proud of our accomplishment?

During our busy lives, most of us don't have time for an existential crisis. When faced with deadlines, briefs, motions, family obligations, billable hours, seemingly endless e-mails, exercise, meeting with friends, and surviving rush hour traffic, the last question we have time to ask ourselves is "who am I?" New Year's is a time of the year when we as a culture examine what we want to change in our lives; it's time to focus on who you want to become.

Have you lost some of the passion you used to have for practicing the law? Have you replaced relaxation time with social media and endless texts? Have you become estranged from family and friends? Have you been spending less time on hobbies and activities you used to enjoy? Have you become addicted to the cycle of stress?

If you answered yes to any of these, you have probably strayed from the person you really are, or want to be. In the law, and as a culture, we protect life, liberty, and property. As human beings, we prize happiness, contentment, peace, and joy. But we do not always protect them. What brings you happiness? What brings you contentment, peace, and joy? For this coming year, create a New Year's resolution that includes ways you can feel more like the person you want to become. Change can seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Think about simple ways you can gradually begin to incorporate a new habit. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Want to laugh more? Resolve to listen to a comedy radio station, read the funny pages, or watch a comedy at least once a day.
- Want to be more present with your family and friends? Resolve to focus on really listening to and connecting to your loved ones when you are with them: your mantra, "be here now."
- Want to feel more confident in yourself? Resolve to start a gratitude journal. Every day, write down at least three things you did that made you proud.
- Want to like to be a more supportive person? Start by sharing words of encouragement with at least three people every day.

- Want to be less anxious and stressed? Resolve to spend just a few minutes in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night to focus on your breath and quiet your mind, letting go of whatever your mind is racing about. In fact, try it right now.

Alternatively, you may want to improve your general attitude toward life. Doctor and author Don Miguel Ruiz uses “The Four Agreements” as a template:

1. **Be impeccable with your word.** Do you say what you mean? Do you believe what you say? How do you speak to others? How do you speak to yourself? Is it true? Is it kind? To be impeccable with your word is to be truthful, to say things that have a positive influence on yourself and others, and to avoid treating others hurtfully. This year, practice impeccability with your speech.
2. **Don't take anything personally.** When we take other people's words, actions, or choices personally (meaning we react strongly to them), we miss the point that their words, actions, and choices are based on their own perspective. This year, rather than reacting to what other people say or do, observe them with curiosity.
3. **Don't make assumptions.** We often assume we know what other people are thinking, feeling, or the reasons they say or do something. But those assumptions are based on our own perspective, or our own reality, and superimposing that onto another person. It is also called narcissism. This year, ask people about their motivations or rationales, rather than make assumptions.
4. **Always do your best.** This does *not* mean being perfect. This means that regardless of the circumstances, or our mood, we do our best to be present and mindful. It also means that we accept our best as “good enough,” without criticizing or berating ourselves.

This year, do your best in your professional and personal life, and congratulate yourself on your accomplishments. At the end of the day, let this be your mantra: “Let it be enough, what you did today.” Sophia Bush, actress/activist.

Click on the links below for more help creating lasting resolutions:

<http://lifecoachonthego.com/skip-new-years-resolutions-set-meaningful-goals-instead/>

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2011/12/27/9-tips-for-setting-authentic-new-years-resolutions/>

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/new-years-resolution-world-peace-5-seconds-at-a-time/0002705>

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