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Starting Fresh

Start the new year off by taking a look at the world and your spouse with fresh eyes.

BY DR. NOELLE NELSON

The new year is often depicted as a baby in diapers, usually wearing a top hat. There's a reason for that. The new year is a great time to start fresh like a baby staring wide-eyed at the marvelous world he or she is just discovering.

You and your spouse have made a "start fresh" New Year's resolution and that's great. You've both committed to changing old worn-out habits and creating new beneficial ones. Now, take it one step further and "start fresh" with what already makes up the life you share. Marvel at the incredible world you have. Not just at the sheer physical beauty of our planet and the universe we inhabit, but at the people, experiences and situations of other's lives.

For example, look at your family with new eyes. What fascinates, uplifts and inspires you about your spouse? Before you say "I wish!" be still inside and really look at your mate. Leave aside your criticisms, dissatisfactions and frustrations for a minute and look at him or her as if for the first time. What delights you? What do you admire? What puts a smile on your face? If you really want to find something about your mate to appreciate, you will.

Do the same with your children, your co-workers, parents, your mother-in-law or whoever else populates your life. Start fresh. Find that something wonderful, surprising or pleasing about the person and dwell on it. Let that aspect of the individual be what you pay most attention to.

Then there's your work, whether you're a full-time homemaker, part-time worker or career professional. Look at your work deliberately to find what fascinates you and what uplifts you to a level of complete adoration. Maybe it's the work itself, the joy of doing something well. Maybe it's those you work with that give you the most joy. Maybe it's the rewards you receive from a happy child's, "great sandwich, Mom!" comment, to a grateful client's relief, to a paycheck, to stock options. Focus on whatever in your work brings you joy as you start fresh this new year and choose to back-burner the unpleasantness, difficulties and other bumps in the road.

The new year gives us a wonderful opportunity to let go of the old and get on with the new. Sometimes the new isn't as much about things, as it is about attitudes. When you choose to view the people in your life for the value they bring to you, you experience people differently and your life changes for the better. When you choose to look upon your work with that same desire, you experience your work differently, and your life changes for the better.

Choose to start fresh in every way this upcoming year—new habits, new attitude, new view on life, and revel in the joy that will inevitably come your way.

Noelle C. Nelson, Ph.D. is a psychologist, consultant, speaker and author. Her most recent books are "The Power of Appreciation in Everyday Life (Insomniac Press, 2006) and "The Power of Appreciation in Business (MindLab Publishing, 2005). For more than a decade, she has helped people live happier, healthier lives through appreciation-- at work, at home and in relationships. You can contact Dr. Nelson via her website, www.noellenelson.com.

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