

How To Create Your Best Year Ever: The Seven Keys to Your Best Life

This Sunday I was interviewed by the wonderful Dr. Luise Light, former USDA Director of Dietary Guidance and Nutrition, on her show "Nutrition On The Line", on WOOL FM in Vermont/New Hampshire. I was talking to her and her audience about the key aspects of my "Prescription For Your Best Life", and she asked me if her readers could read more about this on my website. Well, I've been writing a book about these concepts, and I offer the collection of ideas as a topic for my speaking presentations...but I suddenly realized that my coaching clients and readers don't have anywhere to read about this in more detail. Dr. Light asked me to promise to post this concept on my blog for her listeners, so here it is.

First of all, let's talk a bit about the New Year. What better time to talk about how you're going to make your life an authentic reflection of who you really are and who you want to become. Make this a year in which you'll go for and live your dreams, in as many areas of your life possible: your health, relationships, career, passions and purpose. It's a perfect time to clear the slate and let yourself see your vision of your ideal, most satisfying life, not someone else's idea of what's "best"; for you.

Forget those traditional resolutions that fizzle after a week or two. Don't just run out and get a gym membership without looking at the reasons why, so far, you haven't been able to make that change you dream of, or haven't been able to become that you that you dream of. If you're not passionate about the gym, or your reasons for being there, the changes won't stick and you'll end up feeling worse about yourself.

When I coach people, whether they want to work on their health, relationships, career, energy level, mood, or reaching their dreams, I always start by looking at the big picture. If your relationships are troubled, this often affects your health, career, mood and attitude towards your dreams. If you hate your work, you might be feeling burnt out, you might have health problems related to your work, or you might be grumpy when you get home to your significant other. Everything really does tend to affect everything else, so if you want to dramatically improve the quality of your life, even in just one area, I recommend that you look at it, and your goals, through these seven essential levels.

I call this process working "From Your Cells to Your Soul", just like the book I'm working on with the same title.

o Nutrition: We all know what we're supposed to be eating. Look behaviorally at how you eat. Do you skip meals when you're working? Do you eat compulsively in response to uncomfortable emotions or situations? Do you eat because you're bored? Or do you have unbalanced meals or cereal for dinner because you're lazy? (by the way, I've done all of these!)

What would eating right look like for you? What small change can you make in that direction?

o Body: Get enough rest, and get moving. How do you treat your body, usually? Be kind to your body, honor it, and don't abuse it. Listen to it when it wants to rest; take time for it when it gets sick. Resolve to honor your body this year.

What would honoring your body mean to you, this year? What small change can you make in that direction?

o Life: How much of the balance of your current life is authentically you, versus conforming to the demands of others or society? How does your life feel to you? What would you like more of, what would you like less of? What makes you cry? What are your dreams? What are your passions?

What would the ideal life balance look like for you? What small step can you take in that direction?

o Work: How do you feel about your work? Is it line with your values and dreams? Whose idea was it? Do you clock watch? How do you feel when you wake up in the morning?

What would your ideal work situation look like? What step can you take now, in that direction?

o Relationships: Do the people around you bring you up or down? Based on the people around you, who are you becoming? What important relationships are you neglecting? What are your goals and dreams as a family?

What kinds of relationships would you like to have, and which ones that you have now should you make more of a priority? What can you do, starting now, to move your life in this direction?

o Attitudes & Beliefs: How do you feel about life? What do you believe about yourself? If you encounter a setback, how do you handle it? What does it feel like to be you, inside your head?

What would be the most beneficial attitude or belief change for you, right now? This may seem a tough question, but listen to your instincts…l’m sure you already know. Start thinking the way you want to think (positive, optimistic, kind, forgiving, etc.), right now and work at being that way, every day.

o God /Spirituality: How do you see the spiritual aspect of your life? Spiritual practice has known health benefits. Spend time in nature. Pray, if you believe that it works (I sure do!). Do you have spiritual principles for interacting with people? For example, don’t be offended by what others say or do - for me, this is a spiritual practice. As is loving your neighbor as yourself, and loving the people who are hardest to love.

What thoughts, practices or actions would move your life in a spiritually more fulfilling direction? Start incorporating these aspects into your life, today. You don’t have to, every day, but over time you may find that the days that you start out on solid spiritual ground turn out to be your best.

I know this may seem like a lot to consider, but it’s so worth it. So often we go through life on automatic pilot, doing the same things, making the same mistakes, hanging out with the same people, going through the same routine…and wonder why we’re still not happy, or don’t seem to be getting any closer to our goals and dreams. Praying helps, writing out goals helps, envisioning a better future helps…but what really make it reality are the steady, loving, committed actions you take to improve your own life.

Please, if you have any questions about these areas, or want to share your thoughts, challenges or frustrations with me, don’t hesitate to write me through the “Contact” section of my website. All communications through that area are kept strictly confidential, and go directly to me. I’ll take time to answer you personally.

When I get discouraged, I remember a Mexican saying about ants…be like one, and step by step, you'll get the job done. Ants are so tiny, but they never stop or give up. Millimetre by millimeter, hour by hour, day by day, they make it happen. Seemingly out of nowhere, that big ant hill takes form. And you can build your beautiful, custom-designed mountain, too – it happens day by day. One small effort stacks on top of another, and then another, and then another. One day, you wake up, and you’re at the top! And oh what a beautiful view.

Have a great year!

Susan