

OPINION

Change The Narrative; How to Make the Most of the New Year

BY KACIE DUNCAN

EVERYONE LOVES A NEW YEAR... well, most everyone. Personally, I've always had some mixed feelings about the new year. Part of me gets nostalgic and sad to see another year go, no matter how crazy and maybe not great it was. The other part of me sighs when looking onto another year with another set of challenges. Both of these things still ring true for me, but with one small add on. I now approach the new year as yes, 365 days of new challenges, but also as 365 days to create a better me and a better world.

Most of us know by now that new year's resolutions are often broken before they've even begun. So, rather than setting resolutions, I encourage you to set intentions for yourself.

There is a quote by the Dalai Lama you may have heard before, that I think is important we all take into the new year with us: "The goal is not to be better than the other man, but your previous self." In other words, the goal is to be your best self, not to be better than the people around you. Your goal is not to be better than the people you admire. The goal is – should always be – to be better than you were the day before.

At the end of 2019 I was not who I wanted to be as a person, and every year since I have worked to better the parts of myself I felt needed to change. A hard part in this journey is the trap we all often fall into of comparing ourselves to others. If we want to make 2022 a year of success for ourselves, we need to get rid of the mindset of trying to be better to match those around us, and simply focus on bettering ourselves to the best of our ability.

My personal advice? Throw out your new year's resolutions and simply set the intention to be a better person each day. And when you end the day and realize you maybe acted in a way that took you a few steps back, recognize it and move forward. Make your mistakes and learn from them. Admit when you aren't being the version of yourself that you want to be.

I believe that working to be a better person, or simply wanting to be a better person, is all you can do to make your time on this earth the best it can be. You are human. You will screw up. You will hurt people. All you can do is be intentional about how you live. Be intentional about the words you speak and the actions that you take.

So, my advice to make this year a great year? Decide whether you're going to be intentional. Decide whether you're going to challenge yourself to do better than the day before. Stop holding yourself to unreachable standards. Hold yourself to the simple standard of trying, because trying is always the best you can do.

Desiring Connection: Our Need for Constant Information On the Internet

BY KACIE DUNCAN

WHEN NETFLIX'S "SQUID Games" began picking up popularity in the last year, it took merely days before everyone knew about the show. Within days of the story reaching social media, every woman knew the name "Gabbie Petito." The moment Oprah's interview with Harry and Meghan was announced, millions marked their calendars for the event. These are just a few of the viral stories that swept over the internet in the past year. They range from harmless television shows to a tragic murder of a young woman. Whether a story is made for a good laugh or if it brings tragic news, we have constant access to a nonstop cycle of news from around the world. We have reached a point where we are not only being given endless information, but we feed off that information as well.

Our constant need for detail and news can work for good in instances such as the death of Gabbie Petito. With this case going viral over social media – specifically Tik-Tok – several people were able to come forward with information that assisted police in both finding Gabbie and her killer. In moments such as this, our constant refreshing of the page and retweeting of the tweet has made a difference. The awareness brought to a case helped bring a family a small amount of closure.

In other instances, such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media can harm us as a society in bigger ways than we even realize. And with constant

information being spewed at us, much of it being inaccurate, biased, or calculated, people not only panic but they begin to question the reality of the truth and who can be believed. The new information that is constantly pinging on our phones might be a doctor telling us vaccines are safe, while two minutes later an article might announce to you that vaccines are not safe. It is enough to drive most people to a place of confusion.

It's obvious that this information and our endless need to have new information can have both positive and negative effects. Outside of that, the question remains of why we so desperately need to know everything all of the time. My own personal take on the matter is that our current desire for constant information stems from once knowing so little. I know many people like myself who grew up in a very sheltered community where we were only taught one way of life. As we have gotten older and have access to the never-ending information load of the internet, we have begun to see the many different ways of life there are. For many of us, the desire for constant information comes from a desire to learn or a hunger to understand the things we were never taught as children. We simply want to learn about what's on the other side. How are other people living? How are other people reacting to things? What are other people believing in? These are all the things we once didn't know, and now have endless access to.



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