

## The Mindful Path - Positive Change - The New Normal - Change is possible!

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The fresh new year is upon us. Bundled up in the hopes and expectations of 2022 is the lingering weight of the pandemic. I have been reading "The New Normal: A Roadmap to Resilience in the Pandemic Era" by Dr. Jennifer Ashton. I have found this to be an excellent resource to navigate the coming year.

"The New Normal" suggests powerful ways to minimize our COVID risk. Dr. Ashton recommends all of the usual talking points - vaccination, social distancing, mask usage in public, and frequent hand washing. However, she also strongly recommends that we focus on achieving a healthier weight and exercising. In America, at least 70% of adults are overweight. Many people report they exercise little or not at all.

Americans are aligned with Dr. Ashton when they consider their New Year's resolutions. Year after year, the top two resolutions are dieting and exercising more. The monumental task of keeping New Year's resolutions can be daunting. Yet, studies have shown that after only 60 days, new habits will usually "stick" and become much easier to maintain. Change is possible!

Our lives are often made easier and more convenient by our daily habits. These patterns often make us feel more comfortable, and some of them are enormously helpful to our daily lives. However, others are flawed coping mechanisms for stress or just plain unproductive. It is all too easy to get stuck in situations and patterns that don't serve our overall happiness and well-being. In the new year, practice self-kindness and gently reflect on which of your habits are "good" and which should be tweaked.

Here are some tips to aid in untangling ourselves from our autopilot habits:

- Be honest and compassionate with our life journey and the efforts we are making.

- Have a plan and start small with obtainable, specific goals.

- Write down your goals and why they are important.

- Celebrate any positive change, no matter how small, in the first few weeks.

- Rally the support of family and friends to stay focused on your goals.

- Stop the excuses and expect setbacks. Think progress, not perfection.

- Introduce a thought pause button. Mindfulness and meditation can help us slow down so our brain isn't automatically hijacked by negative habits and poor decisions.

Check out these great mindfulness resources for the new year: the Insight Timer free phone app, audio meditations at [www.pausemeditation.org/guided-audio-meditations](http://www.pausemeditation.org/guided-audio-meditations), and finally Unity Spiritual Center-Denver ([www.unitydenver.org](http://www.unitydenver.org)), who are offering meditation classes at the end of January.

May your New Year be happy, safe, and full of new keys for positive change.

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