



Stone Circle News

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2022? Really?

by Dorie Croissant

I know we have been asked to share what our vision and goals are for this new year. However, my thoughts on this topic are indeed scattered and, being retired in this day and age, a good solid goal is to get through the year one day at a time. A good friend sent me a greeting card not that long ago and the front of it states “Even small steps will get you where you’re going.” So true. Right?

Melody Beattie is a favorite author of mine. Instead of trying to write something, I would like to share a few excerpts from her book entitled Journey to the Heart. A very dear friend gave this book to me for Christmas way back in 1998. Its pages have since been read, dog-eared, and verses highlighted many times.

“Joy is a choice – a deliberate, conscious choice. It’s an attitude, not a transitory emotion.”

“Remember to be kind. Remember to be loving. Remember to feel all your feelings and to take care of yourself. But most of all, remember to be happy.”

“The call to exercise doesn’t come from gyms, health clubs, physical education directors, or diet books. The call to exercise comes from our bodies, from our souls. Find some way to move your body that feels good for you. The better you can hear your body, the more clearly you will hear your soul.”

My guess, ladies, is that there really is a vision and a goal or two to be found within these quotes.

May this new year be kind and respectful to and for each of you.

Welcome to 2022!

*Women have gathered in circles
since the dawn of history
for birthing,
to share story,
at cisterns for washing,
at fires for warmth,
at wells to draw water,
in embraces of profound joy,
in prayer,
in rings of sorrow and mourning.*

*With hands grasped, we gather our
collective wisdom,
energies and strengths
binding us and
guiding us into the future.
Each woman brings her gifts,
placing herself
as a stone in the unbroken circle.*

Affirmation Corner

by Margie Gray

I've been dreaming almost nightly about being lost or not being able to find the destination I'm looking for. This sense of being in unfamiliar territory is a common theme in our world right now. Unfortunately, the only thing that feels familiar is living with the unknown. To mask or not. To vaccinate or not. To gather or not. These are the conversations that have been part of our lives for almost two years now. Where are we headed? What's next? What does the new normal look like, as it is clear that the old normal is truly part of the past?

As humans, connection is part of our DNA. Right now, it is not only a virus keeping us apart, but opinions on: how to move forward in a pandemic, how to address discrimination, what support we should provide to each other, the role of science in guiding us, and even what constitutes "truth." There is an ongoing struggle to wrap our heads around the opinions we do not share. Civil discourse has devolved into Civil War in a very literal sense. When did listening to each other's ideas and finding middle ground evaporate? What is the cause of the polarization of ideas and positions? Why did it become all or nothing, right or wrong, black or white?

So many questions. They wear on me. There are days when I cannot fathom what the future holds for us. I struggle to find optimism for what's next. It would be easy to throw up my hands and give up.

But that doesn't feel like the "right" thing to do. I owe it to myself, to those with whom I am connected, and most of all to my son to find a way to connect, to move forward, and to improve the world. That last one feels like an enormous task, but I remind myself that small changes in trajectory make a big difference in the future.

So how do I begin?

The big shift –I shift my expectations to get a different result. When I expect doom, gloom, and despair, I don't usually find anything uplifting. I had an experience that left me feeling misunderstood and attacked. I then perpetuated that feeling mentally. I looked for experiences that reinforced my feelings. It's hard to say how many positive, affirming experiences I missed while continuing to wrap myself in pain. I had a moment when I realized how negative I had become. I began to shift my focus with an affirmation.

*I am filled and surrounded with light, love and positive energy, NOW and always.

It was the first step. I still had to consciously make the choice to focus on that affirmation and that way of being, but it was a start.

Self-care –

Self-care takes many forms, but it typically falls into three categories: Mind, Body and Spirit. Frequently these three overlap.

Mind – How am I feeding my Mind? I have a love/hate relationship with social media. I love that I can stay somewhat connected to friends and family, but it can become a rabbit hole for me. In addition to posts from my "friends", Facebook feeds me a steady diet of animal stories, crafting possibilities and recipes. Facebook knows me pretty well. The problem is that I can get sucked into a black hole of content that isn't really...

Affirmation Corner—continued

feeding me as much as distracting me. I also find that my ability to sustain attention has diminished due to the bite-sized fast food for the brain. What is the antidote? Non-fiction is a good start for me. Documentaries and books. Thinking. Reflecting on my goals and aspirations and planning how to move toward them. Being with people who are positive and life affirming.

***I feed my mind with information and people that/who inform, inspire, and energize me, NOW.**

Body – What am I feeding my body? Foods that fuel my body in quantities that make sense for me. That doesn't mean that I can't have things that are purely pleasurable, like a dessert. Certainly a full-time diet of chocolate cake wouldn't fuel my body in a way that is useful. I have tested this theory. :-) Another fuel for my body has to do with movement. I can tell when I'm spending too much time sitting. I'm stiff, unsteady, and have no energy. Even stretching and flexing while sitting sends blood to my muscles and is energizing in a small way.

***I feed my body with food and activity that supports health and wellness, NOW.**

Spirit – How am I feeding my Spirit? I contend that some of the same things that feed our mind and body, feed our spirit. What I read or watch and who I spend time with has the potential to feed my spirit. The same goes for food and activity. A meal that feels sacred or doing yoga can definitely feed my spirit. There are other opportunities as well. Immersing myself in nature or art feeds my spirit. "Nesting," whether rearranging furniture, doing a deep clean on a room, or adding a simple candle that provides a sensory refresh, is a way of supporting our spiritual health. Meditation supports my mind, body and spirit in being calm.

***I feed my spirit with those things that support me in being light and joyful NOW.**

Self-care of Mind, Body and Spirit gives us greater capacity to be in the world in a positive, peaceful way.

Be A Witness –

What does it mean to "be a witness"? The meaning that I attach to what I experience and what is shared with me makes all the difference in my ability to remain positive and optimistic. In meditation, there is an image frequently used of a ship or cloud passing by. We notice the ship, but don't create a story around it or hold onto it. So are our thoughts. We notice them, but don't hold onto them or engage in a story of right or wrong, good or bad. Being a witness to the news in the world takes the negative energy out of it. We can still have compassion, send loving kindness, or take other supportive action, but we don't create a story around it. We experience the pure emotion, notice it, and let go.

***I witness the world as it is with compassion and love, NOW.**

This is so much easier said than done for me, but shifting my mindset and supporting the health of my mind, body and spirit support the ability to be a witness.

The key to what's next for me is: being present in this moment; making conscious choices for the wellbeing of my mind, body and spirit based on what I'm experiencing in the moment; and witnessing the world instead of reacting to it. Peace to us all.

Prayer Circle

Jody
Julie
Eleanor
Jean
Virginia

Please let us know the names of those you would like to have included in our prayer circle.

Calendar of Events

Due to the latest resurgence of the virus we found it necessary to cancel the January gathering. Below are the dates for the next few gatherings. You will be notified if we are able to resume on those dates. As before, everyone needs to be vaccinated and bring along a mask for your safety and the safety of others.

Decade Date : Date to be determined
February 19, 9:30 AM : Monthly Gathering
March 19, 9:30 AM : Monthly Gathering
April 16, 9:30 AM : Monthly Gathering
April 23, 10:00 AM : In the Company of Trees

Goals

by Virginia Strait

I want to believe I will have greater success on my continuing resolution of replacing judgment with more open-mindedness. A basic "treat others as I want to be treated" – Matthew 7:1-2 or Luke 6:31, if you will. Share a smile, or offer a kindness when I can. Something as simple as letting another car join in the line of traffic. This pandemic has created an awareness for me of just how blessed I am...I have my home, I am able to work, I drive a car that is paid for, I have reasonably good health and access to great medical personnel. Mostly, I have great people in my life. Yes, YOU!!!

2022 Goals

by Jackie Fitzgerald

My goals and vision for 2022 always starts with a feeling of getting organized for the new year. Time to declutter, regroup and set new goals. I just ordered my new calendar and planner. I have listed all the family birthdays in each month, along with meetings, appointments and the like. I have been getting involved in my new community by working at the history museum along with meeting with the local quilters. My goal is to get to know the history of the area a bit better and to complete my unfinished quilts by year's end.

Some cool thoughts from Louise Ambrose

God bless thy year

Thy coming in, thy going out
Thy rest, thy traveling about
The rough, the smooth
The bright, the drear
God bless thy year.

And, so in this new year that we have yet to live, I will not think of things to get but rather things to give.



Winter Solstice 2021

by Janet Herrick

Out of concern for our participants, the Winter Solstice Ceremony was somewhat adapted in December of 2021. Instead of a nighttime gathering with an outdoor Solstice fire, we opted to combine our regular monthly gathering and a slightly abbreviated ritual and ceremony. There was a good turnout with lots of festivity, thanks to Virginia who always provides us with individual seasonal decorations. Way to go VA!

Regardless of the necessary changes, and the absence of darkness, those gathered participated in the annual retrospection of the significant events of 2021 that impacted them personally. We thought of how those situations affected our lives, how we learned from them, and how we would go forward into 2022. The only dramatic change to the ceremony was not ending it by burning our notes, which symbolize what we chose to leave behind, and our goals for the future. This symbolic burning took place on the actual moment of the Winter Solstice, 10:59 AM Tuesday, December 21. I know this because I burned them myself in my fireplace at that precise moment. The box in which those notes were placed at the gathering the Saturday before was not opened until then.

May all the things we left behind, as well as our intentions going forward, be transformed as the smoke from the Solstice fire rose into the sky on the actual time of the Winter Solstice.



My Visions and Goals for 2022

by Janet Herrick

We are already into January of this new year 2022, and we are still dealing with a pandemic that none of us ever expected would happen. Looking back, I think in general we adjusted pretty well. Yes, there will always be those who look for the conspiracy, or the underhanded evildoer, but in truth it was an opportunistic virus latching onto the opportunity of a changing climate and unsuspecting hosts. Once it found a home it took off like wildfire and did what viruses do, reproduce. We didn't think it would still be here after nearly two years, but it is, in part because not everyone took it seriously. The rest of us have gotten use to putting on a mask, washing our hands, being careful, and getting vaccinated, even boosted.

So, what is my vision for 2022? Definitely not more of the same! It is simply that I, and everyone else, settle down, act like adults, accept where we are, and do the best we can to cope. We can't go backward to the good old days, whatever that means. Things have changed and will continue to do so. My goal is to always adapt to new situations, whatever comes my way. My goal is to meet whatever challenge is ahead on my path with courage, for there will always be another challenge, some big and some small. My goal is to stay focused on all the positive things in my life and be grateful every day for the abundance in my life. My goal is to accomplish something every day that does some good, knowing that even small things have a big impact and positive results.

My vision for 2022 is to see this year as one of endless possibilities and growth. I see 2022 as a turning point. It can be the year in which we use what we have learned, what is most important, and what is best for our world, to enact positive creative actions. It can be a year that we heal ourselves and our planet and find true hope for the future. However, every moment can be a turning point. Each moment is an opportunity for us to make a decision. It is a moment where a choice is presented to us. I sometimes find it discouraging to hear people take one moment, out of the tens of thousands of them in a year, as the defining moment. It is as if they are waiting for a special moment to spur them on to make a drastic change, when we have the power to let every moment be that for us. So, another one of my goals this year is to look at the opportunities in each moment to be a part of the healing and positive change that is possible. Here's to 2022, the best year yet!

In Retrospect

by Jean Gold

The second half of last year took an unexpected turn in my life. In May, after our first post-COVID airplane trip to Philadelphia, to be with our family and celebrate our grandson's college graduation, I began to have some unusual health concerns. About a month after my 80th birthday, I had a series of tests and scans and was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

This began a new journey in my life that required an open mind, but somewhat confused outlook. This total unknown was different from anything I had ever experienced in the past. To complicate matters, my mind had already begun to show signs of some forgetfulness. This side-effect of confusion, added to the side-effects of the medications, made the time even more difficult.

Underlying everything that was happening was the need to live in the moment and take each day (some good/some bad) and deal with whatever came my way. It was not as though there were no thoughts of the future (there were of my mortality and how it would affect my spouse), just a recognition that it was not in my hands.

So, the year ahead will continue to be approached as each day comes. I know that, beyond the next three months of treatments, there will be scans and CTs that will reveal the next steps of my cancer journey. We now have both of our daughters and their families living in North Carolina (this happened over the last year), and the possibility of a move to us to be near them would make whatever is ahead more easily shared and the burden of care eased for some.



10 Hints to Stick to Goals

Adapted from an article by Louise Smith

Chances are at some time in your life, you've made a New Year's resolution, set a goal, or had a vision for the future — and then broken it. This year, stop the cycle of resolving to make change and then not following through. If your goal is to take better care of yourself, get healthy or any other improvement or change in your life, you will have a much better year if your resolution sticks. Here are ten tips to help you get started.

1. BE REALISTIC

The surest way to fall short of your goal is to make your goal unattainable. For instance, resolving to NEVER eat your favorite food again is setting you up to fail. Instead, strive for a goal that is attainable, such as avoiding it more often than you do now. This can be applied to any other goal or vision.

2. PLAN AHEAD

Don't make your resolution or goal a last-minute thing. If you make a goal in haste, it will be based on your mindset that particular day. Instead, it should be something you planned.

3. OUTLINE YOUR PLAN

Decide how you will deal with the temptation to skip that exercise class, have that piece of cake, or forgo your goal altogether. This could include calling on a friend for help, practicing positive thinking and self-talk, or reminding yourself how your "bad behavior" will affect your goal.

4. MAKE A "PROS" AND "CONS" LIST

It may help to see a list of items on paper to keep your motivation strong. Develop this list over time, and ask others to contribute to it. Keep your list with you and refer to it when you need help keeping your resolve.

5. TALK ABOUT IT

Don't keep your goal or vision a secret. Tell friends and family members who will be there to support your resolve to make that change for the better or improve your health. The best-case scenario is to find a buddy who shares your goal and motivate each other.

6. REWARD YOURSELF

This doesn't mean that you can eat an entire box of chocolates if your resolution is to eat a better diet. Instead, celebrate your success by treating yourself to something you enjoy that

10 Hints to Stick to Goalscontinued

7. TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Keep track of each small success. Short-term goals are easier to keep, and each small accomplishment will help keep you motivated. If your goal is losing weight, focus on losing the first few pounds. If your goal is something like meditation every day, be willing to see progress if you manage to meditate several days a week. Keep a journal to help you stay on track, and reward yourself for each accomplishment.

8. DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP

Obsessing over the occasional slip won't help you achieve your goal. Do the best you can each day, and take one day at a time. Remember that every day is a fresh start. Don't give up if one day falls short.

9. STICK TO IT

Experts say it takes about 21 days for a new activity to become a habit and six months for it to become part of your personality. It won't happen overnight, so be persistent and patient!

10. KEEP TRYING

If you have totally run out of steam when it comes to sticking to your goal, don't despair. Start over again! Recommit yourself for 24 hours. You can do anything for 24 hours. The 24-hour increments will soon build on each other and, before you know it, you will be back on track.

Whatever your goals are for 2022, these suggestions will help them come to fruition. What are your goals or visions for 2022?



Decade Day 2022

Decade Day has been a part of Stone Circle for nearly as long as we have existed, now 22 years and counting. The concept of Decade Day began over lunch after a retreat we did at St. Leo Abby nearly 20 years ago. As several of us talked about someone's upcoming significant birthday, ideas were planted. Entering a new decade is a significant event starting at 20 and take on additional meaning as the numbers get larger. We talked about how our society focuses on the younger decades especially with regard to women. Why not focus on the positive aspects and qualities that come with each new decade, what was gained instead of trying to hold on to what we have lost. Within a very short time those ideas formulated into a ritual and ceremony called Decade Day that has been celebrated on or near February 7th every year since.

This year, as before, Decade Day was planned to be celebrated on Monday, February 7th, at 7:00 PM. Due to the ongoing surge in the latest mutation in the pandemic we will schedule Decade Day as soon as possible after this latest threat passes. We will notify you as soon as a date is confirmed. When that happens, please let us know if you or someone you know is entering a new decade in 2022 or entered one in 2021. We invite you to be part of the ceremony and bring along a photo of yourself that is at least 20 years old, as well as an enclosed candle. A birthday cake will be provided for all as we celebrate everyone's birthday and their unique gift to the world. Hope to see you there. Please call Jan to reserve your spot.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Stone Circle operates as a nonprofit entity whose presence seeks to enhance the feminine milieu for women of the 21st century. We truly rely on the generosity of friends and those who participate in programs.