

The New Year: A Time for Affirmations

By Sally Smith

As 2008 draws to a close, it's all too tempting to fall into the New Year's resolution trap. You know the routine.... Dwell on something negative about your habits, your body, or your being, and then promise to yourself that you'll change your ways come January 1, 2009. Then, by January 15, start beating yourself up for not sticking to your plan. Fast-forward eleven months, and repeat.

I propose throwing New Year's resolutions out the window. After all, they're almost always a recipe for failure. As plus-size women, we've lived through our share of weight-related unrealistic expectations and unrealized goals. Why put ourselves through yet another round, and wind up with our self-esteem in tatters? Instead, I suggest adopting New Year's affirmations, a process that helps us pinpoint what is right with our lives and allows us to build on our strengths.

The process of developing New Year's affirmations can be as elaborate or as straightforward as you'd like. The first step involves taking inventory of each area of your life and finding at least one aspect (and hopefully many more) that is working well for you. Here are some questions to get started:

- Career – If you're already working at your dream job, that's terrific. If not, what job responsibilities do you enjoy? Where do you excel? Are you a whiz at managing projects? Are disgruntled customers transformed because of your cheerful, can-do attitude? Are you a thought leader?
- Money – It can be tough to think of a bright spot in the current economy, but try. Is your head still above water? That's cause for celebration. Have you starting clipping and using coupons at the grocery store? Are you working at slashing your credit card debt?
- Romance – If you're in a relationship, have you written a love letter to your mate? Have you celebrated your love? If you're not in a relationship, have you flirted, gone on a date, or made it a point to mingle?
- Fashion – Have you added a splash of color to your wardrobe, tried a new style, or updated your look? Do you do a great job taking care of your skin, hair, and nails?
- Esteem – Have you read a size-positive book? Do you surround yourself with family members and friends who support you, regardless of your body size? Have you received the preventative health care that your body deserves?
- Fun – When you're ready to let your hair down, what do you most enjoy doing? Do you love to host friends? Are you known for your scrapbooking skills? Do you live for your annual vacation in the mountains?

You get the idea. Ask yourself similar questions about family relationships, friends, spirituality, home, health, and other areas of your life. For each area, think about the qualities that you take pride in, the activities that give you that inner glow, and the feelings that put a bounce in your step.

Next, transform each item into an affirmation. For example, if you've recently purchased a fabulous outfit from MiB, your affirmation might be, "I honor myself and my body with clothes that fit, look, and feel great." If you made a year-end contribution to your favorite charity, your affirmation might be, "I share my blessings with others who are less fortunate."

Then, you can let your imagination take flight. If you want to go with the straightforward approach, write each of your New Year's affirmations on a sticky note, and place them on your refrigerator, your bathroom mirror, your car dashboard, and your workspace. If you feel a surge of creativity, grab a poster board and find images that reflect your affirmations, design a PowerPoint presentation, or make a paper chain with an affirmation on each link and hang it in your bedroom.

As 2008 rolls into 2009, the only resolution you need to make is to remember that you're a wonderful, beautiful woman who has much to celebrate. Happy New Year!