

How to Create an Intentional and Powerful Year

The wind was howling and spitting out popcorn snow as we pulled into the winding driveway. I excitedly peered through the car window at the incredible breathtaking view of the two mountain ranges on either side of the house, with the sun casting a magical pink alpine glow on the Bridger and Crazy Mountain ranges.

My husband fumbled for the house keys in the cold wind, found them and opened the door. I felt my heart rush with excitement. How lucky we were to stay in this amazing location for six days!

It was our third annual year-end retreat. Three years ago we started taking a week off between Christmas and New Year's to connect, celebrate our accomplishments and get clear about our new goals for the upcoming year. This has become a tradition that initially was difficult to fit into our busy schedules, but now can't imagine living without.

Some close friends of ours generously offered their newly built house in the mountains for our annual retreat. "You're more than welcome to use our house - there's just one thing, there isn't any furniture in it yet!" I laughed when my husband relayed their offer to me.

I thought, "You've got to be kidding! We're going to spend six days in a house without any furniture in it!" My mind envisioned us eating Zen-style meals as we sat cross-legged on the floor. Fortunately we were able to cram a foldout table and chairs, along with plenty of padding and blankets for bedding, into our Subaru.

Creating a Balance of Fun, Solo Time and Discussing Dreams

It was an incredible time. We struck a great balance of solo time, skiing, running and playing King's Corner (a really fun card game that my husband's cousins taught us). My husband wrote several new songs on his guitar and I worked on a new landscape painting. And, of course, we spent several hours each day talking about our dreams and goals for 2009.

I sincerely want to encourage you to do something similar with your partner. If you don't have a partner, go on a retreat by yourself or with a close friend. It truly is an amazing experience.

After all, when else do we set aside a focused period of time to discuss our dreams and life goals with our partner? Sure, we discuss our dreams and goals in the dating stage, but often, after we get married, our dreams are pushed to the background as we rush to juggle careers and family.

The framework that my husband and I used to discuss our dreams and goals is similar to the framework that I used in Key Biscane, Florida when I masterminded with two of my close friends and entrepreneur colleagues.

1. **Set intentions.** Identify what you'd like to achieve and focus on during your retreat time. My husband and I wrote our intentions on a piece of paper and then taped them to the wall to serve as a constant reminder of what we intended to accomplish and how we wanted to spend our time.

A few of my intentions included getting plenty of exercise and receiving insight on how to achieve my next break-through income goal for 2009 (I got amazing insight and clarity in this area, by the way!).

One of my husband's intentions included writing three new songs (which he accomplished). As you can see, there isn't any right or wrong way to set intentions. It's simply a matter of what you want to focus on during your time together.

2. **Share celebrations and successes.** This was really fun for me. It's easy for me to bypass the success part. It seems as soon as I've accomplished something, I'm ready to move on to my next big goal. I was amazed at all my accomplishments in this past year: starting my new radio show, becoming a published columnist, founding and facilitating some phenomenal coaching groups, achieving income goals, and interviewing incredible internationally-known experts on my radio show.
3. **Get clarity about where you're currently "at".** Most of us are so eager to focus on the goal setting process, that we bypass gaining additional clarity about our current situation. Identify what's going on right now in your financial life, career and personal life. How much money are you making?

How much total debt are you carrying? What is your relationship like with your partner? (This is very powerful to discuss – but be forewarned, it can also be an obvious hot button! Most of the time we let things go unsaid, and resentments can build up over time. It's a great way to come "clean" and move forward).

How are you doing in the following areas: career, health, marriage/family, fun/leisure time, friends/community, spiritual and financial? In other words, think about your entire life, not just isolated segments of it.

4. **Create a vision for your marriage/family.** This is a new category for my husband and me. We talked about wanting to be more intentional with how we treat each other as a couple. We've been together 8 years now (married almost five). It's easy to assume that you know who your partner is after you've been together for a while.

We decided to be more intentional about intimacy in terms of "into-me-you-see" which, in essence, means really seeking to understand each other's perspective instead of jumping to conclusions and not fully listening. We wrote out two to three

sentences to post on our bulletin board at home to serve as an ongoing reminder about how we want to treat each other.

- 5. Identify your exciting, impossible future.** Now we come to the really fun part! Identify your goals and dreams for the upcoming year. I highly encourage you to come from a place of identifying dreams and goals that are exciting for you, instead of merely what you think is possible.

Also, spend some time reflecting on why particular goals are important to you. By gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of those goals, you will be able to access inspiration for taking action during challenging times when motivation is at a low and you'd rather not make the effort.

- 6. Get clear on how you will achieve your goals.** This is the really crucial part. Think about how you will achieve your goals. Ask yourself, "What is currently missing that, if I had in place, would help me achieve my goals?".

I found that I was clear on how to achieve many of my goals, and I didn't need to ask myself what was missing. However, on the bigger and challenging ones (I had about three of them) I asked myself this question, which helped me gain clarity regarding the specific action steps that were needed to pursue those goals.

Live and Love Richly Bite-Size Action Step

Okay, here's the exciting part! This is the part where you get to ask yourself if you're going to read this article for mere entertainment value, or if you're actually going to do something different in your life!

1. Print out this article and place it in your calendar in the month of October or November, so you can start thinking about and planning your retreat two to three months early.
2. Talk to your partner (or a close friend) about scheduling a year-end retreat right now for 2009. Don't wait to see if you're able to take the time off from work. Just commit to scheduling it now, and work everything else in your busy schedule around it. Then, bring this article to your retreat so you can follow the format.
3. I'd love to hear about your commitment to do this! Send me an email, and let me know that you've scheduled a year-end retreat, and where you plan to go. Perhaps you could go to a nearby town or bed and breakfast.

If Taking Time Off From Work is a Challenge

If time off from work and family is a concern, perhaps you could start out with going away for two to three days and then build up to five. If you just don't have the time to

escape, set up a few mini Financial Dates with your partner to go through the year-end retreat format.

My husband and I have already scheduled our next year-end retreat. We usually decide where we'll go in December, since we always stay in Montana and plan on driving around two to four hours away from our home.

Also, make sure you purchase a journal to record your goals and visions. It's fun to look back at your progress through the years!