**What Is Your Theme For The New Year?**

We’ve entered the brand new year and that means we are weeks into our 2013 goals and resolutions and I have a different thought for you.

Depending on the calendar you follow and how you view life, any day can be the start of a new year when you think about it. But it is the start of 2013 on the Julian calendar and it is often a target date to re-set intentions.

Many choose to consciously or informally identify what they want 2013 to look like for themselves. Some state their desire too broadly and that plays a role in why some past resolutions remain undone. Maybe you’ve heard that mapping out a year at a time is a good idea and it turns out that is just too overwhelming for you. Perhaps your best plan for your purposes and your style might be a week or a month at a time rather than a calendar quarter much less a whole year. Perhaps the shorter time span might be something you can see with enough detail to make it happen. Starting your new year by planning a week or a month with specific tasks may bring you and the people you serve greater satisfaction all around. A year is somewhat of an arbitrary measure of time anyway and could be a complete mismatch for you. Nothing says you must address change and recreate all now or ever! The more you allow yourself to see the big picture, the more you recognize the choices you have and you can further develop the specifics of the changes you want in your life.

Though disregarding the time factor in resolutions, there is another element crucial to one’s success. Maintaining the commitment to these resolutions is difficult as I am sure many are familiar with the disappointment of making and breaking and feeling guilty over broken resolutions. (According to national polls, while about 50% of us Americans make New Year’s resolutions, after the first week only 75% of those resolutions are still in place.  At about 6 months, only about 46% of the resolutions are surviving)

So, how are you going to motivate yourself and not perpetuate the cycle of making and breaking agreements with yourself and grow at the same time? Here is the different thought for you for 2013…

You might consider what I discovered this year instead…develop a **personal theme** for your year …instead…

A **personal theme** (or a focus for your year) seems more doable, more measurable, more fun, more gratifying and can allow you to recognize your growth as a result.

Some examples of personal themes I have thought about and suggest are: *love, acceptance, peace, self-respect, fun, connection, abundance, laughter, health, creativity, balance, patience, tolerance, judgment, courage, having a sense of humor, or positive thinking, respect, gratitude, forgiveness, joy, fear, anger, depression, spirituality, nature, hope, faith*… but I am sure you can think of others.

Having a personal theme for your year:

1.      Helps you recognize ***your*** needs in your life and gives you the opportunity to work on that need all year long

2.      Allows you to commit to and work on that theme every day of the year in order to address that lack in your life.

3.      Allows for more positivity in your life by focusing on honing your ability to create activities that increase or promote the theme in your life rather than focusing on past problematic areas.

4.      Focusing your energy in one life area may help you recognize other blessings in your life

5.      Encourages personal growth that you will recognize and celebrate

Adopting a personal theme for the year has advantages over making New Year’s resolutions for the bereaved. Because in grief, all one’s energy is consumed by survival, seeking control in one’s life and pursuing normalcy, therefore, the griever’s ability to focus on and reflect upon ***you***(and the ***inner you***) disappears in grief. Choosing and using a personal theme for the next year will not only allow you to experience the chosen theme in your life on a daily basis but it will begin to help move your thinking from your head to your heart. (And your heart will never tell you to exercise more or that you have gained weight!)

I’m working on **presence** this year. Like many of you, I thought I was already aware of being present in the moment but I realize that choosing this theme has already honed this awareness in many situations.

New Year’s resolutions are ordinarily difficult to keep for many reasons.  However, grieving adds another dimension to the implausibility of keeping them while the making and not keeping resolutions can perpetuate grief’s roller coaster cycle of life.

Can you think of a focus that you might like to claim as your theme for 2013? It just might lead to something good in the coming year….