

Welcome to the year of the dog

We are now well into the year 2018 and have just marked Chinese New Year and said welcome to the Year of the Dog. This year, according to Chinese astrology is a particularly good year to focus on health, introduce healthy habits, finding balance and change the way we live. Healthy dogs are happy, loyal and relaxed creatures and if mine is anything to go by enthusiastic, loving and patient.

Spring is round the corner with Easter falling early this year lent began last week making this a good time to get into some good routines and habits and engage in a little life inventory/spring clean.

Giving something up for lent? One of my friends decided to give up lying this year. I was a bit puzzled and unsure what she meant because she doesn't come across as a deceitful person. She explained how she had become aware that using small lies to herself and others in order to avoid doing things had become almost automatic and habitual and had started to have an impact. She has a strong desire to be truthful and authentic and is a very insightful person. It takes courage to look at aspects of yourself that is not very pleasant without falling into destructive self-hate.

Habits creates tendencies that goes on to form our characters that then shapes our lives who we are and what we become. So it is valuable to spend some energy time taking inventory of existing habits and desired habits. Asking yourself who you want to be and having a reality check can be sobering, not always nice, but grown up.

Resolutions made around the time of New Year celebrations might by now have fallen off the radar and the resolve from January didn't last the distance and are all but forgotten. But perhaps revisit and take a closer look delve deeper into what drove the idea. Often there is lack of deeper connection with the reason for change. What is behind the reason and what made you stop or give up. If there is a desire for change, try again. Small steps over time will build character.

Giving something up, like drinking coffee for example, for the sake of it, is good in so much that it strengthen the willpower and practice determination. A bit of a willpower workout. However, unless it is heartfelt and there is a desire to be a non coffee drinker, the drinking will most likely continue after the pause.

I regularly have a break from coffee for a week or so just to un-grip the hold of the habit and exercise my willpower. But then I resume, often with a lower level of consumption. It gives a sense of freedom from my habit and a feeling of not being ruled by it.

Differently, I aspired to have a regular meditation practice and there is the intention is for daily practice. It is something for my health, long term wellbeing and development. Now meditation is on par with brushing teeth. It took a long time to get to that point I used to have entertain the idea of it being good but only managed to sit irregularly and at different times in the day. I knew it was good to do daily but I had not created a routine for it. But when I connected with deeper desire and commitment to meditation as part of how I live well and good maintain health it wasn't difficult.

Dogs are good at relaxing and introducing good habits for sleep and rest is good. It would for most require some willpower in reducing screen time, curbing habitually reaching for a device that is over stimulating, distracting and enormously time consuming but might just mean introducing a regular bed time.

Dogs are also playful creatures so if you have a very regulated scheduled life you might benefit from a bit of habitual playtime. Getting out onto the grass in the park connecting with you inner dog.