Resolving to resolve – just start again – Jan 2019

Happy new year!

It's that time of year again where we all make resolutions to make ourselves better in some way. For a long time I resisted making resolutions at New year, feeling like it was a setting up for failure – we are coming off the back of Christmas indulgence: indulgence in food, drink, spending, resting, family or friends. If it is a 'happy' time for us then we splurge. If it is a sad time for us then we can feel overwhelmed. Then the new year comes, with its sprinkling of optimism and ideas that we can change and do better this time…then the glitter fades and by the end of January we are in the midst of a cold, dark, dreary winter with no Christmas on the horizon to distract us. The wheels come off and we feel worse than we did before.

But I feel differently this year. 2018 was a tough year for me, but it was also the year that I stepped into yoga in a more committed way than before. I discovered Yin yoga and the calm and self-awareness that I could find within it, which was a revolution to my tendency towards head-led determination and pushing myself. Yoga gave me space when I needed it most and has helped me – is helping me – navigate some difficult emotions and challenges.

Over the past year I have explored all sorts of yoga, lots of lovely Yin and also more dynamic and creative session and two things really stand out for me.

One, how to listen to my body and respond rather than impose onto it what I think it should want or needs. As a massage therapist who has spent years working with bodies under the assumption that their minds and bodies are one and the same, you'd think I would do this already! But as per the

second point, we are also conditioned to strive and aim to make ourselves better rather than accepting who and what we are at any given point.

The second is the subject of this blog – Just start again. I've actually had a painted sign with this up at home for a few years now, but only this year has it really started to feel like something I can really let happen. It's a core principle in meditation and I see my yoga practice as meditation. Such a simple principle – when your mind wanders, just start again.

What we often do in life when we lose focus or drive is not that but beat ourselves up, get frustrated, implement harder rules or drivers, tell ourselves we are 'bad' or 'wrong' or 'not good enough'. Then our resolve becomes a carrot that needs a stick to beat us towards it, rather than an internal drive to be better.

To 'just start again' we actually need some self-compassion and understanding. We need to appreciate that we are trying, we are ok, we are inherently good, right and good enough. That can be a big challenge.

Here are a few examples from my own experience over the past few weeks:

- Oversleep and wake too late to go for a run.
    - Chose not to berate myself for 'obviously being inherently lazy' and rather acknowledge my body must have needed sleep, I'd had a stressful day the day before and I could just go for a run tomorrow – just start again
- Decide to cut way back on refined sugar after Christmas had ramped it from an occasional part of my diet to a (more than once) daily habit…Find some chocolate money in the door of the fridge and chomp through it with guilt-tinged delight
    - Bit of regret here, but rather than hang on to that and assume that I had failed and was beholden to sugar for ever now, I focused on the fact that it tasted nice but I know I feel better without it and I can start being free of it again now (especially as the chocolate is now finished ;-)) – just start again
- Withdraw from my partner rather than sharing with him when I felt exposed and fearful
    - Yin yoga saved me here, where I was able to tap into what that really was rather than just reacting to the 'bad feeling', then I could step back towards him to explain – just start again.

Maybe we don't have to make New Year resolutions that we berate ourselves for giving up in February – maybe we can simply resolve to keep trying, to just start again.