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IFMA presidents message: New year's resolutions

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There is a reason that every year, the month of January leads in gym memberships, new bank accounts, and magazine subscriptions....every year, we resolve to do better than the year before at all the challenges of the past 11 months that then elude us for the next 11 months.

The coming of the new year signifies our opportunity to start fresh. It also triggers the guilt associated with continuing old habits. Are new year's resolutions useless and, even worse, detrimental to progress?

I think not. As an optimist, I think that anything that steels resolve, or at a minimum, inspires it, can't be a bad thing. I also think that we are our own worst enemies when it comes to our progress on New Year's resolutions, or resolutions of any kind.

An honest assessment of one's progress in a given year (which might take input from outside sources to be more objective) more often than not reveals progress toward our goals. The guilt enters when the goal was unrealistic to begin with. For instance, those of us who resolve to lose weight (the most common resolution, along with exercising more and eating more healthily) have often set goals akin to becoming a supermodel. More often than not, we have in fact made strides toward all of these subset resolutions, just at a more modest (i.e. realistic) pace than Superman might have done. Last year my best friend, turning 40, resolved to fit into her New Year's dress from 1993....needless to say, that didn't actually happen. But who cares??

The dress doesn't even fit mentally, stylewise, or socially....why do we care so much that it fits anatomically? Have we really become such harsh judges of ourselves and our progress?

The real truth is that every resolution has to be fluid, adjustable for the curveballs that come our way every day, month, and year...our ability to weather these continuous storms, and enjoy the periods of calm that hopefully lie between, are the measures of true resolve.

My advice? Make your resolutions. They are important milestones to optimism about our potential. But keep in mind that in between every January 1st, life happens. And that is really where the measure of progress can be seen. Focus on the progress that means something to you, your family, and your community. Commit to making a resolution that helps someone else, instead of criticizes some aspect of your appearance or your behavior.

And get rid of the remnants of New Years' past....I promise you, they just don't fit for 2011.

Our best to you and yours for a prosperous and healthy New Year!

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