

A Time to Dream

By Patti Teel
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Last month, caught up in the hustle bustle of the holidays, I told myself that in January I'd get back on track and zealously pursue my goals with renewed enthusiasm and determination. But instead, I've spent most of the month dreaming and making plans for the upcoming year. I began to question why I hadn't been able to 'buckle down' and accomplish more.

In an informal survey of my friends, I discovered that they were also getting the year off to what seemed like a slow start. I began to realize that most of us need some down time to regroup after the holidays. But at the same time we feel pressured to get a lot done and start the year off productively. It's important to remember that there are many ways to be productive. While sometimes it involves taking action, at other times it takes the form of quiet reflection, dreaming, and planning.

Like all living creatures, our natural predisposition is to ebb and flow with the cycles of nature. For those of us in the northern hemisphere, January's cold, short days and long winter nights are a natural time to hunker down and hibernate inside our cozy homes—as we turn inward and embrace the darkness.

Although we may initially feel as if we're just wasting time, this invaluable period may very well fuel the flame that keeps us moving towards our dreams throughout the year. After all, if we take off on our annual adventure without reflection, our new year's itinerary is likely to bear a striking resemblance to the previous year's, including run ins with the same detours, potholes and roadblocks. But if we take the time to look back and reflect upon last year's accomplishments and disappointments, we can choose whether or not we want to change our itinerary. We can consciously decide whether we want to go in the same direction, choose new paths and destinations, or simply avoid the detours, roadblocks and potholes that waylaid us last year.

Take some time to reflect upon the previous year and dream about the incredible possibilities that await you this year.

Make a list of some of the things that you're pleased about. Think about the people that you were kind to or helped. Revel in your successes, acts of kindness, and accomplishments. Encourage your children to do the same. They may enjoy drawing pictures of themselves in all their glory as they accomplished something wonderful.

Reflect upon the things you wanted to accomplish, but didn't. Do you recognize a lack of passion or excitement? Is it a goal that you would still like to attain? If so, try to reframe it, putting the same excitement into planning for it as you would for your favorite activity.

Sometimes we continually struggle to achieve the same goal, year after year. The idea that we will fail yet again becomes ingrained in our psyches and actually keeps us from attaining it. Oftentimes, a misguided belief that we acquired about ourselves as children, continues to limit us. If so, it may be helpful to think of something wonderful that you've accomplished, using it as a metaphor for your more challenging aspirations. This can also be a great way to encourage a child. For instance, if your child struggles with shyness, but is great at baseball you can say, a boy who hits a homerun can introduce himself or a boy who hits a homerun can make a new friend.

TIME OUT WITH PATTI TEEL

DREAM THE DREAM AND STEP INTO IT

If you're feeling less than ambitious this month, you may simply be in perfect harmony with the season. So go with the flow: relax, kick back, and enjoy a wonderful time of peaceful reflection and renewed hope.

Dubbed "The Dream Maker" by People magazine, Patti Teel is a former teacher and the creator of an award winning relaxation audio series for children. Her book, *The Floppy Sleep Game*, gives parents techniques to help their children relax, deal with stress and fall asleep. She is a popular speaker and presents innovative workshops for parents, children, and health professionals. Get R&R tips and sign up for her newsletter at www.pattiteel.com. You can listen to her online radio show at www.timeoutwithpattiteel.com.