



**“In 2015 I will do the new year resolutions I set out to do in 2014. The same resolutions I promised to do in 2013, which I had planned to do in 2012, which I originally wrote out in 2011.” Did you sound something like that back at the start of the New Year?**

**H**i and a very belated Happy New Year! Hopefully it has started well and you are on course to a positive and eventful one. As this is the first publication of *Karen Inside Out* for 2015, the obvious article to write about is our New Year resolutions- yes!

Remember the ones many of you set last month!

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Did you sound something like that back at the start of the New Year?

Did you keep to the promises you made in January? Did you even start them?

I recently saw a post on a social media web site, “If procrastination was an Olympic sport, I will compete in it later!”

What are you planning to do in 2015? What will you promise over and over to accomplish, only to fail yet again now that the first month has passed? It always comes down to one simple thing; low frustration tolerance. That’s all we put in front of ourselves. A thought error we put in our minds where we think something is too hard to do when in fact it’s easier than we think. We set ourselves ridiculous goals and targets and lose faith in ourselves only to fall at the first hurdle. That, and the fact that we don’t put our goals into a step-by-step order.

I thought it would be sensible to start 2015 with a challenge I put to you all.....

## YEAR 2015 GOALS OR OUTCOMES?

Have you already set in place your New Year’s resolutions and goals?

Here is the challenge... just for a moment, reflect back over last year and answer honestly; did you stick to last year’s resolutions which you said you would adhere to? Look back and consider if the triumphs outweigh the tragedies?

The key is to think of something small to start with. Once you have achieved that goal, move on to something bigger. When you discover the power of achieving what you set out to do, you will build on what you want to accomplish. There’s no point going out and trying to run a marathon when you have not got the physical capacity to run a mile let alone twenty-six!

So in this month’s article, I would ask you to consider some beliefs I have that I know help when coaching our clients.

The basics of forming a well-constructed outcome:-

### 1. Focus on what you do want - not what you don’t want.

It must be what you do want- rather than what you do not want. In other words, it must be stated in the positive.

What motivates a lot of us to change is not the attraction of the outcome but the discomfort of the current state of affairs!

The difficulty with this is that the more you focus on what you do not want, the more fixated you become on it. The person with anger begins seeing reasons to be angry everywhere. The overweight person begins fixating on eating and the need to feel full. The smoker sees people ‘enjoying’ cigarettes everywhere and becomes convinced that life will lose all meaning if they cannot smoke ever again.

If your goal is “I don’t want to lose my temper” you will continually focus on NOT being angry rather than on being calm or reasonable or good natured and pleasant and enjoying great relationships with those close to you.

If your goal is “I don’t want to remain fat” you will continually be thinking of yourself as being fat rather than focusing your attention on a slimmer, healthier and happier ‘you’.

If your goal is “I don’t want to be smoking cigarettes” your imagination is continually being fed messages about cigarettes- which feeds the craving for a smoke- rather than on what you will experience from being smoke-free!

Objectives involving negation need to be rephrased in a positive way, for example: “I want to be able to be calm in these situations” or I want to reach this weight within

this period of time” or “I want to enjoy better health and enhanced self-esteem through becoming an ex-smoker”.

### 2. Have a way of knowing when you have achieved it.

This is the ‘evidence’ step. You must have a clear picture of yourself having achieved this objective. This gives your brain and, in particular, your Reticular Activating System, a target to home in on.

The brain seeks to bring your dreams into being- hence Ralph Waldo Emerson’s advice “Be careful what you set your heart on, for it will surely be yours.” If you give a lot of attention to thoughts of being healthy that’s likely to be how your life will go. The same applies if you focus on thoughts of becoming unhealthy.

If you think about anger and anger-evoking situations, you are likely to remain an angry person. If you think a lot about food, the food you shouldn’t eat, you’ll crave it more. If you spend a lot of your time trying to ‘not’ have a cigarette or think of cigarettes you’ll simply stoke the fires of your craving. But since you cannot NOT think of something- you have to have a replacement thought or series of thoughts ready. These will be thoughts of how you want to be. If you do not have these, you’re unlikely to reach your goal. It’s a bit like trying to walk into your future while looking backwards!

In the three examples I have selected you must see yourself as if you are watching a snapshot or a video or yourself. This must be dissociated. Which means you can see your face or your head in the picture.

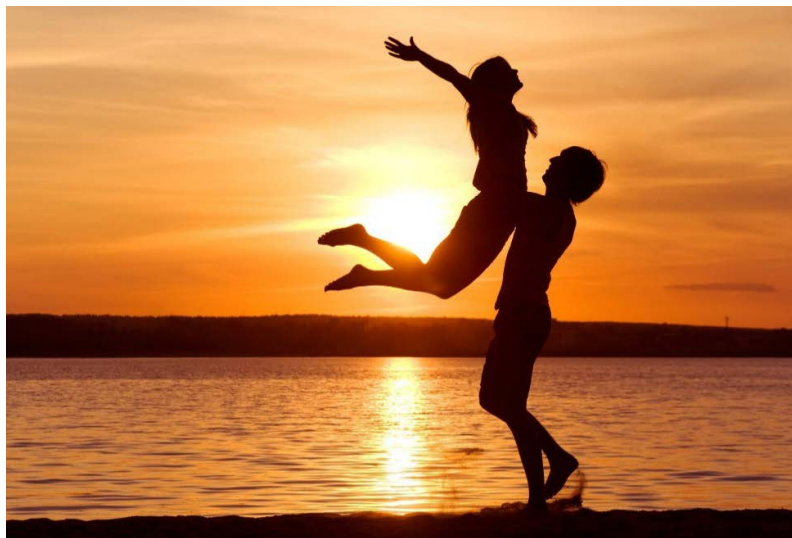
See yourself having replaced the old, angry responses with a calmer, more humorous, more reasonable attitude, or clear picture of yourself enjoying having achieved a healthier and more enjoyable weight or size. Or see yourself enjoying the many benefits of being someone-who-used-to-smoke.

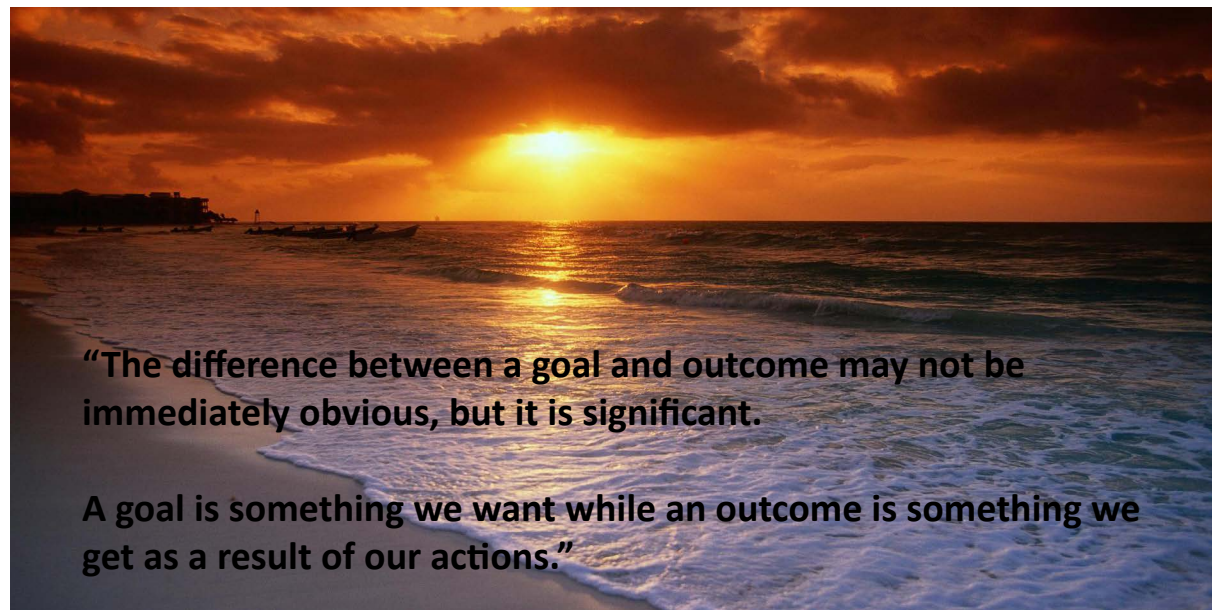
### 3. Know when and where you want to have it - and where you do not want it.

It’s useful to also specify where you want to have this outcome and where you don’t want to have it. For example, feeling calmer in a particular situation would specify where you want to have this.

On the other hand, you may want to be calm in all situations in which case simply state that. The same applies to feeling lighter and slimmer or to feeling free of cigarettes and enjoying better health.

However, let’s say, for example, that your goal is to be more assertive. You may want to be more assertive in some situations and not in others. If your goal is to be more relaxed, you might want this at home or at work- but would





you want it on the football field or at a lively party?

#### 4. Ensure it is something 'you' can achieve!

A lot of dreams remain dreams because they require other people to change. Examples include: "I want to be loved." "I want to have a better relationship." "I want to be popular".

Each one is flawed in that they require other people to change their behaviour- and this is not a goal- it is a wish or a dream! You cannot force other adults to feel feelings or behave in a certain way (although a lot of people-who-get-angry do not seem to realize this). You can influence them, negotiate with them, plead with them, or bribe them but that's about it- they still have the final say.

To be 'well-formed', an outcome needs to be within your realm of influence. You cannot make someone love you, a relationship requires input from all participants, and your popularity or lack of it is not something you can directly influence since it is dependent on the taste of those with whom you would like to be popular.

Becoming calmer must be achieved as a result of your own efforts. This means that you must be able to remain calmer in situations that previously would have been irritating even if everybody else continues to behave in exactly the same old way. Becoming slimmer and lighter objective must include the ability to be able to manage your eating even if people around you continue to eat lots of fattening food. Your smoke-free future must include the ability to be able to be comfortable even if other people around you are smoking cigarettes.

The second part of this particular step in the process is that you must spell out what you need to do to bring your goal into reality- you must detail your plan of action.

#### 5. Both the advantages and the disadvantages.

Identify both the advantages and the disadvantages of

making this change. When we decide to achieve something desirable, many of us tend to hypnotize ourselves with how perfect life will be when we achieve it.

This is unrealistic. No single lifestyle change can make life even nearly perfect. And if we do not realistically evaluate the upside and the downside of going for and of achieving a particular objective this likely to get in the way of our achieving it- or of enjoying the benefits once we have achieved it.

Yes, by all means, detail each and every advantage that will result from achieving your outcome- this is a highly motivational exercise. But, in addition, detail each and every drawback or downside to seeking to achieve it. Let's look at our examples.

Aiming to be calmer in situations that previously irritated you could mean that you won't have the satisfaction of seeing other people intimidated by your behaviour. And it may mean that you have to allow other people to "get away with it" when they don't meet your standards or when they behave in ways of which you disapprove.

Achieving a healthier weight will likely include having to eat less, having to forgo favourite foods, having to exercise at inconvenient times, and a whole series of other drawbacks.

Being healthier and free of cigarettes will involve physical cravings and discomfort for a week or two. It will also involve psychological cravings which may endure, albeit in decreasing intensity, for quite some time afterwards.

By detailing and acknowledging the advantages and the disadvantages upfront, you approach the situation realistically, you know what to expect, and you are more likely to stick with and to enjoy the benefits of your success.

#### 6. Make it worthwhile.

Your objective must be linked with your own personal

values. This means that you must know "what's in it for me". Think of your values as being the feelings that you will feel as a result of achieving your outcome and, and this is most important, the unwelcome feelings that you will be free of or will avoid feeling as a result of achieving your outcome.

List these values/feelings in some detail- aim to get at least 4 or 5 of each i.e. the ones you want to feel and the ones you want to avoid feeling as a result of achieving this outcome.

Isn't this a lot of bother...?

A few people have remarked to me that this process seems like a lot of bother. And, yes, it does take a little thought and care to create an outcome that is clear and achievable. You could take an hour or three to go through the whole process. But if your outcome isn't worth this amount of thought, is it worth going after it in the first place?

Doing it this way takes a little bit longer and requires a bit more preparation but it makes achieving the outcome a lot easier since instead of being "in two minds about it", the process will focus your mind and your energy and will enable you to marshal your resources and your motivation to achieve it.

#### 7. The payoff.

Having a clear and carefully defined outcome significantly increases the likelihood that you will achieve your goal. This way of defining your outcome changes it from being a dream to being a target.

We use this process in our LSM coach training workshops. Students comment that they can see it more clearly, that they feel more focused on it, that it appears more realistic, and that they feel more motivated to go for it.

But most importantly, enjoy what it is you have set out to do. This way you are more likely to achieve it and you can say with pride, "I did it".

*Catch up soon, and thanks!  
Les.*

**Les Symons is one of Africa's most sought after personal development coaches. His passion in empowering individuals to take control of their lives has seen him change lives around the world – gaining an excellent reputation for sincere, highly valued and respected guidance. His company – LSM Coach, provides corporate communications training and is a subsidiary of LSM Africa – A consultancy firm helping professionals plan towards their families' futures.**

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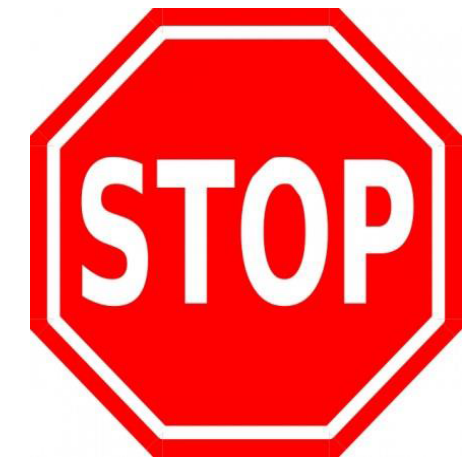
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