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Humanists of Utah is a Chapter of the *American Humanist Association*.

We are a nonprofit corporation organized to advocate and promote ethical, rational, and democratic humanism among our membership and the larger community.



Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
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Let Your Resolutions Be

Dissatisfaction is the American religion, or at least a key tenet of doctrine (gun worship is a different topic for another time). My general summary of the global religion is consumerist death cult. We exchange our life for stuff, waste our time for and with stuff, and throw it all away, too often throwing ourselves away in the process.

This is why wellness is an act of revolution. Contentment is an act of revolution. When we are well, when we are at peace, we become heretics. It is true that drive and dissatisfaction also improve lives and change the world, but perspective and framing matter tremendously.

That is why in this January column I urge you to let your New Year's Resolutions be. Let your goals be. Let yourself be.

The secret to change is to realize that no change is needed.

See, heresy. We all need to change, to be better! we protest. We also need to buy more and debt more. In fact, we could call the current approach to wellness emotional and existential debt. We are supposed to feel like we never have enough and never are enough.

This becomes the most ironic when applied to the wellness industry, supposedly designed to help us become simultaneously more peaceful and successful. The problem is, since most consumerism is based on dissatisfaction, if we become more peaceful and successful, we will become worse wellness customers. The wellness industry is dependent on us not getting well! Or at least relapsing. But we need to remain dependent to the products and programs pitched our way.

So, what does this have to do with New Year's Resolutions? Let's get practical. I have found it powerful to differentiate our dreams, our goals, our intentions on one hand and our actions, behavior, and patterns on the other. With our every thought, word, and action, we are training ourselves and those around us. Our bodies notice the patterns. So, around this time, our bodies might say, "Oh right! It's time to join a gym or say we are going to change our diet! Then we will work for two weeks, then we get to go back to what we are doing now!"

A key step around this self-defeating pattern is to bring our

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Let Your Resolutions Be

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goals and actions into alignment. And that doesn't always mean push harder and do more. We can get honest and serious about what we really want. Within the overwhelming systems of which we are a part (another important topic for another time,) we behave in ways that get us what we want at some level.

Gentle honesty and discernment are so important, because we are so quick to label things good or bad, productive, or destructive. I playfully call myself a devout agnostic (which makes for great conversations as a Chaplain,) and this curious, playful not-knowing is a core tenet of Buddhism as well. What is good? What is best? We don't always know. Hindsight helps, but even hindsight is mostly after-the-fact storytelling anchored in our biases and worldview. Yuval Harari stated that we seem normal when our delusions match the delusions of those around us.

So perhaps part of your Humanist beginning of the year ritual can be to get curious with yourself. Get compassionate with yourself. And most of all, with this curious and compassionate way of being, love and accept yourself as you are, in this moment, right now. I don't mean that in a trite, cliché way. I mean that in an earnest, effortful way. Take seriously how you are, how you behave. Now let's get back to dreams, goals, and behavior.

Dreams. Let your dreams have their own life. Too often we think of our dreams with disappointment, thinking of the things we wish we could have done or become. But our dreams are worthwhile as they are! Our dreams elevate us into a higher view of ourselves, adventures in possibility. Our dreams teach us about our values. Yes, some dreams should be released, especially the ones projected onto us, but all of our dreams provide us information about who we are and who we could be.

Goals. Goals can be powerful, especially when we relationship with them more gently. Goals are intentions relating to future behavior. I organize my life in part by using notebooks (so many notebooks), and I realized that I was harming myself with my "To Do" notebook of

daily tasks. Now, I love to-do lists, but I realized that I was making lists and leaving most boxes unchecked, most tasks uncompleted. So what I did was I made another notebook, an "Intention" notebook. And I changed my "To Do" notebook to a "Done" notebook. I write down the list of what I need to get done in my Intention notebook, and then I only write down tasks in my "Done" notebook when they are finished (or when I know for certain that I will get something done, because I have to.) Instead of conditioning myself into the story that I am not following through on my tasks, I am discerning my intentions and feel a sense of accomplishment whenever I write down what I have done.

Behavior. It is true that we are made up of our actions and habits and patterns. Describing your weekly patterns is a powerful practice that helps you see where you are right now.

My favorite three assessment questions are these: What is it like to be you? What do you want to do about it? What do you need? Instead of pushing ourselves with a list of goals, demands about where we should be, we can start with a gentle inventory of where we are now. We can explore our behavior and patterns, our fears, and our values. And then we can bring that clarity into relationship with our dreams and goals and find a way to achieve those goals and dreams in a way that aligns with who we are, no transformation necessary.

Happy New Year. You've already got this.

And now I can check the done box on writing this column.

—Jared Anderson
HoU Chaplain

If you pray for rain long enough, it eventually does fall. If you pray for floodwaters to abate, they eventually do. The same happens in the absence of prayers.

—Steve Allen
TV host, musician, actor, etc.
1921-2000

[Click here for more info about Steve Allen](#)



Humanists of Utah meetings are open to the public and free of any admission charge. A discussion and light refreshments follow the speaker's presentation. Come join us and **bring a friend!**

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- ◆ *General Meetings* are for all members and the general public. There are no admission charges.
- ◆ *Discussion Group* meetings are open to everyone. A different book or topic is covered every month.
- ◆ *Board Meetings* are planning and business sessions. They are open to all members.
- ◆ Eliot Hall is in the First Unitarian Church located at 569 South 1300 East in Salt Lake City.
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All Public in person
meetings are CANCELLED
again until further notice
Due to the Pandemic



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