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New Year, New Me! Essay

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### Stop, Think, and Wonder

New Year's resolutions drive me crazy. I always make them, but I never really seem to follow through on them. Thus, I have to wonder whether that lack of follow-through has to do with what I choose to "resolve" to do. This year, I'm going to try looking into Habits of Mind as a way to determine what I can focus on. Since Habits of Mind impact everything I do, maybe—just maybe!—this year, I can stick with it!

The Habits of Mind I selected were (1) *Responding with Wonderment and Awe* and (2) *Listening with Understanding and Empathy*. I see the "responding" habit of mind as not only being mindful of what's going on around me, but also being able to appreciate it in a meaningful way. It's like taking a moment to observe something happening and purposefully reflecting on it, such as watching a toddler discover the joy of playing in mud and questioning my own experiences with similar joys of discovery. The "listening" habit of mind is one that means a person is not just waiting for someone else to finish talking. Rather, he or she is taking the time to really "get" what the other person is saying or what his/her perspective is. It's like being the man in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" who left the cave to have a better understanding of his world.

It took me a while to choose which habits I wanted to work on. Honestly, I should work on all of them, but these two seemed to be where I needed the most work. For example, I just seem to get so busy with things that I don't even notice what's going on around me. I just want to get things *done*. I have to wonder, though, whether I would actually get things done more effectively if I did take the time to just wonder a bit. Certainly, "awe" is difficult sometimes for me as I've done so much and seen so much. But I miss that feeling! Additionally, I really do need to start listening more effectively. I don't always take the time to clarify what another person is saying;

sometimes, I just blurt out what *I* think. I do need to accept that I don't always know everything as there are multiple perspectives to consider.

My SMART goal for each of my habits of minds are as follows:

- By the end of each week, I will have taken at least fifteen minutes to pause, reflect, and wonder on something that's going on around me, no matter where I am, making sure I am able to identify what awe I experience.
- By the end of Spring break, I will engage in at least two conversations with two different people who have differing political opinions than my own and consciously endeavor to understand them.

I feel these goals are reasonable and achievable because the reflection is a reasonable amount of time and most likely won't interfere with the things I am doing. Making sure I am able to identify my awe might be more difficult because what's happening might be negative. Nonetheless, I should strive to even find awe in that. Moreover, talking to two people is reasonable; although, I do hope to talk to more than that. The difficult part will be making sure I fully understand them!

The SMART goals do link to the criteria I set up for the habits I selected. For example, I can tell a person is responding with wonderment and awe if he or she is not only taking the time to think about what's happening, but is also seeing what's happening. Whether it's sitting outside on the patio, listening to birds or waiting in line at the bank, that person is able to identify something of wonder and/or awe about that moment. The criteria for the listening with understanding that I would endeavor to meet would be not interrupting (ever), being able to restate what the other person to the extent that he/she says I understand, and then taking a minute or two before saying anything. Asking questions as opposed to making statements is also an indicator that I'm working towards that habit.

Ultimately, this approach to New Year's resolutions seems to be more practical for me. Plus, there's only two (not my usual ten!), which seems much more do-able. I guess that's the key to following through on any resolution.