**Episode #144: Do This Instead of New Year’s Resolutions**   
  
  
  
**Full Episode Transcript  
  
  
  
With Your Host  
Dr. Janel Anderson**  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Hello and welcome to another episode of the working conversations podcast where we talk all things leadership, business communication and trends in organizational life. I'm your host, Dr. Janel Anderson.   
  
Well, Happy New Year everyone. Today we're diving into a topic that might raise a few eyebrows it's related to New Year's, the decision to ditch the age old tradition of New Year's resolutions.   
  
Now I know what you might be thinking, no resolutions, doesn't that go against the grain of what you're supposed to do? Well, my friend, let's challenge the status quo and discover a different way to create a successful and fulfilling year ahead.   
  
I'm going to share a more strategic and sustainable approach to personal and professional growth. So buckle up for a paradigm shifting episode that challenges the conventional wisdom around resolutions offering you a unique perspective on setting intentions that align with the dynamic nature of the year to come. Let's break free from the resolution rut and pave our own way to success in the year ahead.   
  
Now as we navigate the fast paced world of work and life, it is crucial to question the effectiveness of our traditions. And New Year's resolutions might just be one of those traditions. Are your New Year's resolutions truly driving positive change? Or are they just another relic of a bygone era or worse yet? Something you use to beat yourself up with because most of our New Year's resolutions fail? That's what the research tells us.   
  
So as you might guess, I'm going to declare New Year's resolutions a thing of the past and instead I'm going to share a practice that I have been using for the last 15 years. It's a practice that I teach to my executive coaching clients as well. So you'll get a new take on goal setting and I will bring you a fresh perspective on how we can approach the New Year differently.   
  
I have a downloadable PDF on my website on this episode show notes page. So that would be janelanderson.com /144 Episode 144. And you can download a one pager that will walk you through this. So I call this your life and annual inventory. Now this comes from a book that I read many many years ago called “The not so Big Life” by Sarah Susanka.   
  
So Sarah Susanka is an architect and in fact the first book of hers that I read and is called the not so big house, and I read the book but not so big house in preparation for remodeling a 100 year old home in Minneapolis that I lived in, and we wanted to really maximize the use of the space while preserving the charm of the house. And Sarah Susanka is an architect who for many years lived in Minneapolis and had done that kind of work in making older homes more livable in the contemporary age. Now she has since moved from Minnesota to North Carolina and I believe that's where she still is now. But anyway, I used her book the not so big house, like a Bible finding the nooks and crannies and crevices and really maximizing all of the space in that house as we went through the design process for a remodel.  
  
Well then she wrote a book called The not so big life and the subtitle of the book is making room for what really matters. And it's a book about downsizing certain parts of your life and upsizing other parts of your life so that you really are creating space for what matters the most to you. And what matters the most any one of us is going to vary from person to person. So there is no set formula on how to do it. But it's a really great book for guiding you through making some purposeful changes in your life.   
  
So how does that relate to my end of year process? So again, I call this your life and annual inventory. So every year, right around the end of the year and the beginning of the new year, I take some time to unplug for a few hours, and I take stock of my accomplishments from the past year and capture my dreams, my wishes and my intentions for the coming year. So again, it's based loosely on a process that Sarah Susanka offers up in the book The not so big life, but I have taken it and turned it into my own but I do like to give credit and props where they are due.   
  
So I journey through the past year and take stock of also what's happening for me in the present. And then I throw my anchor forward to think about what I want to make happen in the coming year. And I capture those desires and longings for the year ahead as well. So this is a three part process. And when I can make time for it, I prefer to do it in three separate sittings. So over the course of three days, where I'm taking anywhere from a half an hour to as much time as I possibly can muster on each of those three days to go through the process. I also use a specific notebook for this process that I only use once a year to do this because looking back at past years is exceptionally fun thing to do.   
  
So, make some time and follow this process. Consider like the strategic planning for your life for the year. So make some time for this year and then turn it into an annual process. So I'm going to walk you through the three steps and what I do in each step.   
  
So step one is the year in review. So you might use a calendar for this because it can be very instructive in triggering some memories for you. Write down all of your accomplishments since last year, January one. So when I'm doing this now, in early 2024 I'm thinking all the way back to January 1, 2023. What was every single thing that I created or instigated or facilitated? Maybe a wonderful dinner party that I threw in February Yep, that goes on the list. Impromptu ski vacation that you snag for cheap in March. Absolutely. That goes on the list. The promotion that you got in May? In there, okay. So anything that you did personally or professionally, so if you did something like you taught your niece how to knit that goes in there any you know you did a good turn verse for a friend. You were there for somebody when they needed it. And again, of course those work accomplishments as well. They all go in there. Even things that you might think of as second nature, managing the household kids and finances. Put them in there the successes so make sure you are recording everything all the way down to the Halloween costumes that you made by hand for your kid.   
  
We don't take enough time to celebrate our successes. So really be present with yourself. As you are making this list of your successes. This is time for you to really revel in all that you've created. All that you've made happen, the impact that you've had on other people's lives, whether that's your customers, your co workers, your friends, your family, your neighbors, and your community. So make that list of everything that you did to really kick butt this year. And I don't care how you write it. I don't care if you write it out in full sentences, or if this is a list of bullet points. But try to include every single thing that you did. Again, that's why it can be so helpful to do this with a calendar in hand so you can be looking back on what some of those milestones were because a lot of times that stuff gets recorded in our calendar. Okay, that's what you'll do on day one. If you're splitting this into a three day process, and again, it might take you half an hour, it might take you a few hours.   
  
Step two then is to think about the present and I call this the radical present. So now you've got your accomplishments of the last year clearly in view. Now it's time to connect deeply with your current state. What are the concerns that you have right now? What are the interests that have the biggest hold on you right now or feel the most significant for you? What music and art and books and movies are you drawn to recently? What are the things that are immediately capturing your attention at work, the exciting projects and maybe the things that you're dreading as well? It doesn't all have to be sunshine and roses. What are you most resisting? What are you most reluctant to do? What do you procrastinate about? What are you looking forward to? Are there any things that you are trying to force into existence that you are pushing hard on? And then also, are there any things that you are feeling some interesting synchronicity about some things just sort of happening at the same time or similar things happening? In your life, so connect deeply to your current state?   
  
It's what Julia Cameron in her book, the artists way, she calls it getting current. So it prepares you for creating your wishes and dreams for the coming year. And in the artists way, Julia Cameron recommends that you do a session of getting current what she calls the daily pages, getting your pages every day, but you don't have to do them every day if you don't want to. But for right now, I want you to get current with what is top of mind for you right now. What are you worried about? What are you concerned about? What are you interested in? This is a place for you to just get current with yourself.   
  
And again, everything is on the table here. This isn't just about your personal life. This isn't just about your professional life. This is about both, any and all everything you're worried or concerned about anticipating looking forward to procrastinating from I said that a few times. I guess I am a bit of a procrastinator. It's a good place for me to look. All right now again, you can take a half an hour or you can take a couple of hours to get all of that out on paper.   
  
Now you'll be ready for step three. and again, I do like to break this into three days and to do three separate sessions. Now in step three, you're going to be thinking about the year in advance the year to come. So what do you want to have happen in your life in the coming year, in all areas of your life again, work, family, personal relationships, your relationship with yourself, fun. And what do you want to have happen? So think about all of those categories and take each area individually and explore for yourself what your heart most desires, from changing jobs to be more present with your children to hiking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon with your best friend from grade school, whatever it is, write it all down.  
  
Explore the contours of your dreams for the coming year. Now, the more that you allow yourself to play in this exercise, the more you will connect with what you are yearning to do, what you are yearning to make happen and bring into existence in your life, both professionally and personally. And when you really allow yourself this dreaming and scheming. You start the amazing process of bringing it into being. The best part of this exercise actually comes a year from now. Because once you've completed this process, you're going to put the journal away and you're not going to look at it at all until next year.   
  
And then when you start doing this for the year that has just ended for the end of 2024. The very first thing that you're going to do is you are going to start this whole process with a leisurely read of what you did right now at this time. You're going to start the process with that leisurely read of what you had accomplished in 2023. What was top of mind at the beginning of 2024 when what you hoped for what you most desired as you envisioned the year in advance for 2024.   
  
You will come away amazed and inspired by what has happened in your life in the past year. And then the fun part is you get to do it all over again. So imagine yourself instead of Happy New Year 2024.It's now happy new year 2025 And you're starting this process again for the second time. It is so much fun. It is so much fun. And when I definitely carve out extra time, I can even flip back through years past and that is where the true joy comes in. Because when I look back to something that let's say happen, maybe what I was thinking and dreaming of when my kids were little and now that they're teenagers and in their young 20s It's so much fun to look back on what I was creating for myself and what my hopes and dreams were for my family and the same goes for my business. When I look back 10 years ago to see what I was thinking about and dreaming about making happen in my business and then I see where how far I've come and what I've created now oh my gosh, it is just such a rewarding experience.   
  
Now I will also warn you that once in a while there's something maybe off maybe even more often than once in a while. There's things that didn't go as planned. And that's okay too. It's okay to look back on those things and see what you had dreamed of and maybe it didn't come to fruition and maybe your life took a strange turn of events because something circumstantial that you never could have predicted. And those happen both for the better and for the worse. But it is very rewarding to be able to look back through years worth of data to see what my accomplishments were, what I was radically present to in the moment of writing and what I was hoping to create in the coming year.   
  
So that's my assignment for you. In this first week of January to take a moment to do this process. Again, your annual inventory is going to start with the year and review then you are going to get radically present to what you are thinking about right now. And then step three, you are going to create the year in advance and write down all of the exciting things that you plan to do the accomplishments and you know even some of it is a little bit mundane, but if it inspires you write it down and get it in there. This is such a fun process and I can't wait to see you explore with it.   
  
All right, my friends your year in review. This is the time of year to be working on it. Your annual inventory.   
  
Now remember, the future of work is not only about technology, it's about the values we uphold the communities we build and the sustainable growth that we all strive for. We need to keep exploring, keep innovating and keep envisioning the remarkable possibilities. that lie ahead and this exercise will help you with that. As always my friend stay curious, stay informed and stay ahead of the curve. Tune in next Monday for another insightful exploration of the trends shaping our professional world. Until then, happy New Year and be well my friends.