

# What's next for you?

## Possibilities

January 2015 Newsletter



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Everyone is always looking for answers. But in day-to-day life, questions are often more important than answers. Here are some reasons... **More...**



As most parents know, kids are born curious. From day one, they seem driven to figure out how the world around them works. Can parents encourage this urge to "know"? **More...**



If you make resolutions, you can avoid disappointment and boost your chances for success. How? By following simple steps of good goal-setting. **More...**



Aside from being a popular time to make resolutions to eat better — January also boasts several yummy national holidays! **More...**

## Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

# The best answer is often a good question

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Everyone is always looking for answers. Early on, we're nudged in this direction. We get graded on our responses in school. We may flunk or feel frustrated when we can't come up with the "right" answer.

But in day-to-day life, questions are often more important than answers. Why? <sup>1</sup>

- **Questions open us up to more information.** When we have an answer, we may feel like we're "finished." But questions push us to keep exploring. We can actually learn more from good questions than from good answers.
- **Questions keep us mentally agile.** Questions keep us thinking and guessing. They prevent us from resting on our "laurels" and feeling like we know it all.
- **Questions connect us to others.** We often seek out and bond with others when we ask questions. We brainstorm and share ideas. Having answers doesn't force us to interact. But asking questions can be an ongoing, social experience.

## Learning to ask good questions

Not all questions are created equal. Here are examples of questions that can be more — or less — productive than others.

- **The closed question.** Any question that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" is a closed question. That's because once you get the answer, the conversation comes to a close. Here's an example: "Are you happy/sad/single/married/cold/warm?" You'll likely get a simple yes or no — and no more information — when you ask questions like these.

- **The open question.** You can't answer an open question with one word. An open question usually starts with words like "how," "where," "when" or "what." The answer has to be more detailed than one word. So you get more information when you ask an open question. (Note: It's a good idea to avoid "why" questions even though they are, technically, open ended. "Why" questions often make people feel defensive and can cause people to close down rather than open up.)
- **Questions that lead to more questions.** Perhaps the best type of question is one that leads us to consider more questions. Rather than supply us with answers, this type of question fuels critical thinking. Each question opens the door to more and more questions. Our world expands as we go through this process.

So don't feel pressured to give instant answers. Instead, follow the thread of interesting questions. You may make discoveries that are far more meaningful than a yes or no.

<sup>1</sup>[www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)



# Why, Mommy?

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Curiosity is the desire to question and learn. And kids are born curious. From day one, they seem driven to figure out how the world around them works.

## Do kids need a push to be curious?

As most parents know, kids have an instinct to ask questions. They seem to have endless energy in that department! Their natural curiosity makes them eager to explore all the time. Adults in children's lives can encourage this natural urge to "know." When adults support the quest to discover, they can help shape habits to make their kids lifelong learners. They can help boost their children's performance in school and beyond.

## How can parents, caregivers and other adults help?

Here are some practical tips:

- **Be a role model.** When you spend time with your children, wonder about things. If you take a walk, wonder out loud about the trees, flowers and sky. For example: "I wonder how we can tell how old this tree is?" "I wonder how far up the sky goes?" Questions like these let your child see that you're interested in the world around you.
- **Follow their lead.** Notice what interests your kids. If they really like music, play it in the house and car. If they love flowers, buy them a few gardening tools. Spend some time digging and planting together. Find some books on plants and read them together.

- **Answer their questions according to their level of understanding.** Before you answer a question your kids pose, ask what they think the answer might be. This can be a good way to understand how much your children will grasp. Once you hear their thoughts, you can add or modify to give an answer that's on their level.
- **If you don't know the answers, don't fake it.** You might feel like you have to have all the answers. When you get stumped, it's a chance to learn with your child. You can say, "That's a great question. Let's find out together." Then go to the library together to hunt for answers. Or sit down and search on the computer together. Again, you're modeling something important: the desire and resourcefulness to learn when you don't know.
- **Give your kids a chance to use their curiosity.** Many kids are enrolled in extra activities like dancing, karate, singing or art. But do your kids have "free" time? Never underestimate how important this can be.

Children don't need to be programmed every minute. Free time gives them the chance to ponder, create and explore. If you doubt this, consider how much fun kids can have with a cardboard container. Their curiosity and imagination can turn an empty washing machine box into a tent in the woods, a pirate ship on the high seas and who knows what else!

Walt Disney once said, "Curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."<sup>1</sup> Encourage and enjoy your children's curiosity and learn through life together.

<sup>1</sup>[www.brainyquotes.com](http://www.brainyquotes.com)

# Promises, promises

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Do you make New Year's resolutions? In 2012, Time Magazine printed a list of the resolutions that are most often broken or forgotten. They include: I will.... lose weight, quit smoking, learn something new, eat healthier, become debt-free, spend more time with family, travel to new places, stress less, volunteer more and drink less alcohol.

## How to make resolutions that stick

If you make resolutions, you surely have good intentions. So avoid disappointment and boost your chances for success. How? By following some simple steps of good goal-setting. Here are just a few:

- **Choose your resolutions wisely.** Avoid promising drastic changes that are probably beyond reach. And don't make resolutions on impulse.  
  
Take your time and ask yourself good questions. Will your resolution continue to be important to you as the year goes on? How will it improve your quality of life? Will you be happier and healthier if you follow through? Resolutions need to have a clear pay-off in order to be worth tackling.
- **Limit the number of resolutions you make.** Make one or two resolutions at most. That way you can celebrate and feel good about your successes instead of feeling bad about failures. You can always add more resolutions later; there's no real magic about making resolutions on January 1!
- **Be honest with yourself.** Are you resolving to change because someone else is pressuring you? If so, it probably won't work. You really have to want it yourself. Change can be hard and you're the only one who can do the work for you.

- **Be realistic.** Want to lose weight? Set a goal of 5 pounds and applaud yourself when you get there. Then go for the next five. Want to start saving more money? Put aside a modest amount from each paycheck. Once you're comfortable doing that, you may increase it since you'll know you can do it! In other words, take it slow.

Set smaller goals so you can enjoy achievement. You can always raise your goals if you find you're exceeding your expectations. That's much more gratifying than quitting because you can't keep up the pace.

- **Get support.** Some things can be too hard to change on your own, especially if they're ingrained habits or behaviors. Luckily, there's lots of support out there.  
  
There are groups that can help you stop or cut down on smoking, eating, spending and drinking. Enlist friends who'll encourage you. Stay away from those who'll tempt you or sabotage your efforts. Also, consider getting professional counseling to guide your change process.
- **Change your mindset, change your life.** Making changes is really about changing how you think. That's hard, so be kind to yourself.

Remember that judging yourself harshly can keep you from moving forward. Congratulating yourself is much better motivation. So, every time you achieve — or come close to achieving — a goal, give yourself a big thumbs up!

# e-Thoughts — So much for resolutions... I'm hungry!

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*Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.*

Making resolutions gets old for me pretty fast. Sure, I'm going to try to eat better in 2015. Still, I was happy to learn that January boasts some yummy national holidays in case I need a little break from being so good! <sup>1</sup>

- **January 1 is Spaghetti Day.** As far as I'm concerned, pasta is heavenly. Cover it with tomato, alfredo or cheese sauces. I'll even eat it plain. Count me in for pasta anytime.
- **January 19 is Popcorn Day.** Does anyone go to the movies and bypass the popcorn machine? Skip the butter and it's pretty healthy as snacks go!
- **January 21 is Granola Bar Day.** I'm only including this so I feel less guilty about being excited for the other food days.
- **January 24 is Peanut Butter Day.** Peanut butter is fabulous in every way. It reminds me of my childhood and the countless PBJ sandwiches I carried to school. It's not only a major comfort food, but it's packed with protein and healthy fats.<sup>2</sup>
- **January 27 is Chocolate Cake Day.** Twist my arm.

- **January 28 is Blueberry Pancake Day.** Gild the lily with a bit of whipped cream? Enough said.

With the many weight loss and fitness goals we set this time of year, all of the above may seem just plain wrong. But, remember: everything in moderation.

Along with our promises to change, I think we need to keep a few calories of fun in our lives. So thank you, January, for providing some delicious reasons to pursue my "other" resolutions for now!

<sup>1</sup>[www.thenibble.com](http://www.thenibble.com)

<sup>2</sup>[www.prevention.com](http://www.prevention.com)

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