

## How To Have a Happy New Year

Are you into making New Year resolutions such as eating less or exercising more? The enthusiasm for self-improving resolutions tends to wain pretty quickly doesn't it? In any case, in my humble opinion, most New Year resolutions tend to be a bit self-centred. How does giving up sugar, for example, help us to love our neighbours more, or turn the other cheek when someone annoys us?

So I am going to suggest a New Year resolution we could all make that really would help others as much as ourselves. We could simply vow to stop complaining so much. We could stop complaining so much about the weather, our health, the state of the economy, Brexit, Trump, and anyone or anything else that tempts us to get irritated, fearful or depressed in 2017.

A lot of us are now saying that 2016 was a terrible year, and yet if you are reading this message, I can more or less guarantee that you were not tortured at any point during 2016. You were never starving - unless you went on some self-imposed fast for a while - and your health problems did not prove to be terminal – at least not yet. So why so glum?

A few years ago, Gloria and I read a brilliant little book entitled, 'A Complaint Free World: The 21 day challenge that will change your life'. The book claimed that *less pain, better health, more satisfying relationships, a better job, being more serene and joyous* could all come about for us if we just stopped complaining out loud for 21 days in a row. The book also gave loads of real life examples to back up this impressive claim. The problem was that Gloria and I just could not get through the challenge. In fact, if I am really honest I do not think I got through one whole day without mindlessly blurting out at complaint about something – or someone.

So, I rather quickly gave up the challenge, but I have never forgotten it and I really think that the beginning of 2017 would be a brilliant time to revive it. There is a saying that reminds us of the importance of choosing gratitude over complaining which is, **'What we focus on in life is what we get.'** If we keep focussing on the negative, we will tend to experience life as harsh and miserable. On the other hand, when we insist on expressing our gratefulness for all that we have, the universe tends to give us even more.

How or why does this happen? Because the world we see around us is basically a reflection of what is going on in our own minds. Now, I know this just does not seem to be the case, and I am certainly not claiming that if you stop complaining in 2017, everything in this troubled world will suddenly be all right. Even if you managed to not make one single complaint about the world in 2017, I am afraid there would still be wars, other conflicts, life threatening natural disasters and all other kinds of misery.

Our troubled world is not just created by your mind, it is created by humankind's collective thoughts, and these tend to be pretty fearful and even aggressive a lot of the time. But moaning about the low collective consciousness of humankind is certainly not going to raise it! Whereas every Saint or Bodhisattva who walks this earth spreading nothing but unconditional love and peace wherever they go, actually counteracts a huge amount of negativity with their all-powerful inner light.

Now of course, you and I are not saints or bodhisattvas, but we can certainly commit to becoming 'Bodhisattvas in training.' We do not even have to become formal Buddhist practitioners to take a Bodhisattva Vow.

But we can at least keep taking one small step towards the goal of dwelling in love and peace at all times regardless of how dark the world around us seems to be. Every effort really will count, especially if together this New Year, we take a solemn vow to complain less and love more throughout 2017.

Just imagine that if instead of a few hundred people reading this message, a billion people read it and each one decided to complain less each day and instead extend more loving thoughts, words and deeds out to friends and enemies alike? Would that change our world for the better? For sure! Big Time!!

So why don't we get the no-complaining ball rolling and join all those other brave and exceptionally mindful pioneers who are determined to do their own bit in creating a complaint-free world, or at least a world in which love and kindness triumph over grievances and hate.

Peggy-Jane Foster  
New Year Message for 2017