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Dear Reader,

The month of December is connected to an ending and to the closure of a year's chapter for many people. Endings are the necessary step for new beginnings. Nothing new can emerge if something doesn't end. This is as simple as the life cycle that happens in Nature, and we are part of Nature. So we want to share with you an exercise that can help you in looking back and looking forward.

Enjoy the reading!

Isabel Rimanoczy  
Editor

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## TIME FOR LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

by Isabel Rimanoczy

This exercise has two parts. The first part is designed to help you do a reflective inventory of the highlights of the year.

### Looking Back

1. *Get ready.*

The accelerated rhythm, of our lives means that days fly by at ever increasing speed. To-do lists grow and are seldom fully completed. As if on a treadmill, we keep running and never seem to reach the place of quietness – the place of arrival. We are so busy committed to make progress that we have no time to look back, ponder, assess what happened, extract learning and meaning. As a consequence, the most valuable parts of our life experience remain untapped. Some learning may percolate instinctively into our subconscious, but even this can lack the rich processing of our reflective thinking. But I have good news. To find that place of calmness is actually possible, and we can make it happen: it depends solely on us, on our personal decision.

How? By creating silence, a time for ourselves, for doing nothing and just being. We don't need to lie on the beach or climb a hill to do that. We can simply close a door, leave the Blackberry in another room, sit with our back to the computer, and turn off the TV or the music. Some find their quiet time in contemplative practices, prayer, meditation, walks in Nature. This exercise invites you to try out a technique that doesn't require going anywhere. Just find a silent place. Begin this way: sit and just be.

## 2. *Inventory of highlights*

Write a letter to a friend who hasn't heard from you for a year. Reflect what were the highlights, not so much a plain account of what happened or what you did, but rather what the different important events, encounters and activities meant for you. If you don't think you have the time to stop and review the highlights of the year, just compare how much time you spend thinking of problems and unsolved situations, versus the time you spend thinking of what was really wonderful, unique. You may discover something new about yourself.

## 3. *What does the text tell you?*

When we write in a journal, the pen knows more than we do. Once you have finished writing the letter to your friend, which in essence is a reflective journey through the highlights of your personal growth in 2009, make another pause. What is this letter telling you? What is the message about what makes you successful, happiest? How are you contributing to the positive events that happen to you? And what about the difficult moments, what lessons were there hiding for you?

*"Life brings us over and over again the lessons we still have to learn about ourselves"*

*Horacio Cortese*

This part of the exercise is best when sharing your reflections with a close friend.

## **Looking into the future**

### 1. *Identifying the rooms*

Think of the different realms of your life as rooms of a house. We do different things in different rooms: in some we cook, in others we sleep, we connect with others and talk, and in others we eat, watch TV, connect with our physical body, etc. Using the analogy of a house, what are the different "rooms" of your life? Think of them as areas in which you would like to set some goals for 2010.

Here are a few classical examples

Family – Partner – Work – Leisure time – Health – Personal growth – Finances – Community – Friends – Spirituality – Sports

Build the "rooms" for your own house. Draw one box for each one. You can also use size and proximity as ways to describe their importance or interrelation.

### 2. *Setting goals*

Taking one room at a time, start reflecting what goal/s you want to set for yourself in that area.

Be specific and realistic.

### 3. *Identify the challenges*

Take a magazine, it doesn't matter which one. Go through the pages of the magazine asking yourself the following question:

What challenges do I anticipate to meeting my goals? What obstacles will I have to overcome?

The magazine will become the Oracle, and you will ask the question as you look through the images and headlines. Cut out the images that give you an answer. Write down the answers in your journal.

#### 4. *Putting things together*

How can you apply your lessons from 2009 to the challenges you anticipate in meeting your goals in 2010? Find the clues in your own experience, in your own history. Be mindful to focus on what worked, on what helped you achieve your goals, since this is where your resources lie. Be mindful to look at the mistakes, frustrations and shortcomings as signposts indicating you what you need to do. As Uncle Wilbur would say, "If mistakes are not a lesson, why bother making them?"

### **Growing out of your plans**

Now that you've dived into your experiences of 2009 and swum into your dreams for 2010, you're ready for the final, perhaps the most important step.

Are you prepared for the unexpected? What happens if what you think will happen doesn't happen? How much are you invested in your plans? How much is your identity anchored in the things you want to have, do, or achieve? What remains when you think that none of these plans will come through? Do you panic, get anxious, nervous, bothered, uncomfortable with this thought, or with this question? Think twice, because you may be about to discover something really important: that when all your plans fall through, what remains is the real, authentic you. What is left is the profound sense of self, the being. Something that is deep and intense, and that doesn't depend on events happening around you.



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LIM News is published by LIM LLC  
 Editor: Isabel Rimanoczy  
 Editing Support: Tony Pearson  
 21205 Yacht Club Drive, Suite 708  
 Aventura, FL 33180, USA  
 Ph/Fax: +1 (305) 692-4586  
 E-mail: [newsletter@LIMglobal.net](mailto:newsletter@LIMglobal.net)  
<http://www.LIMglobal.net>

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