

# Guidelines For a New Year's Resolution

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 3 min read

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Towards A More Fulfilling Life. The opportunity for making your New Year's Resolution will be just after the Refugees and Precepts at midnight. Now we are approaching the end of the year, and it's the perfect time to reflect how we have done in the past year. We can then take some lessons for the New Year. One good way to reflect is using four aspects of well-being: Physical well-being, Material well-being, Social well-being, Spiritual well-being. These four aspects give us a complete and balanced view of well-being. By reflecting on them, we will have a complete view of how your life as a whole progressed in the past year. To help us reflect, these are some questions we can ask ourselves for each aspect. By giving honest answers to them, we will be able to see whether or not we have progressed the way we wanted in each aspect. For the questions to which our answer is no, we can ask why. For example, take this question: Did you achieve the desired income level? If our answer is no, we can then ask: Why? The answer might be because of circumstances beyond our control. But it may be a time to question what our income level should be. Whether it is fair or whether we expect too much. Whether life wouldn't be easier if we reduced our expectations. So, here are 20 questions to help you reflect the past year. You may consider others, of course.

**Physical well-being** (The Buddha tells us that one of the necessary supports for spiritual practice is good health.) Have we established the habit of exercising? Have we established the habit of consuming nutritious food? Are we sleeping well? Do we feel physically fit? If you have an illness or disability, are you caring for this appropriately? What resolution comes of these reflections?

**Material well-being** (We need a sufficient level of material well-being to support our spiritual practice.) Have you achieved your desired income level? Have you established the habit of spending less than you earn? Have you been able to eliminate debt? Have you established the habit of saving? Have you reduced your spending on some unnecessary expenses? Has your career progressed as you wanted it to? If unemployed, are you spending time to your advantage? How much of your wealth do you offer to charity? What resolution comes of these reflections?

**Social well-being** (This is the spiritual practice of Brahmavihara, the social virtues, in all its aspects) Have our closest relationships been fulfilling? Have our relationships with our families been as good? Have we maintained good relationships with our friends? Have we maintained good relationships with our workmates? Did you get to know people from more diverse backgrounds?

**Spiritual well-being** Have you found your life's orientation? Do our ethical standards and behaviour match up to the teachings of our spiritual teachers? Have you built the necessary habits for spiritual growth? They could be meditating, developing virtues, reading sacred texts, for example. Are you maintaining and developing spiritual friendships?

Overall during the past year What are you most proud of? What do you most regret? While the questions listed here are not comprehensive, at least they can give some idea about our progress. Besides, we will be able to see which aspect requires more attention. Since we should maintain a

balance of all aspects, the aspects, least developed, are the ones that we should pay more attention to. These questions can also help you identify the specific actions you should take for each aspect. For example: If my answer to the question 'Have I built a habit of exercising?' is no, can I determine a time every day devoted to some physical exercise or can I join a gym or local group? If my answer to the question 'Did I get to know people from more diverse backgrounds?' is no, can I join a group or society which has a more varied membership – art clubs, walking groups, gardening societies? If my answer to the question 'Have I found my life's orientation?' is no, then I can ask: 'Have I put enough effort into my practice or do I need to explore other spiritual teachings?' We can then prioritise the actions based on what will make the most impact on our lives. All these will help us set your goals for the New Year. Our objective should be to have good and balanced progress in all four facets.

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