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THRIVING

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Taking Stock of Your Life

Ancient Romans named the month of January for Janus, their god of gates, doors and beginnings. Always pictured with two faces—one looking toward the future, the other back at the past—Janus is a fitting symbol for a new year.

As we step through the doorway from 2002 into 2003, it's natural to do as Janus does: look back and ahead. But this year, instead of just reflecting on the past year or making New Year's resolutions, consider using this first part of the year to take stock of your life.

Who are you? What do you believe? What do you really need?

These are questions worth examining, even if the answers might be scary or hard to hear. For when we discover who we really are, we stop living on auto-pilot and start to live with intention, focus and purpose. Our choices become clearer. We begin to make active choices in our life, instead of making excuses or passively living with the status quo.

Here are a few questions to get you started. Have a journal or some way to record your thoughts. (Writing by hand keeps you in touch with your heart.)

- **What is aching to be expressed?**
- **What needs healing?**
- **What unique gifts, talents and skills do you bring to the world? How are you using them (or not)?**
- **What is that small, still voice inside you whispering (or shouting!)?**
- **Who do you need to forgive? How about yourself?**
- **How are your beliefs holding you back or getting in your way?**
- **What can you let go of in your life?**
- **What makes you happy?**

Taking stock shouldn't be just an intellectual exercise. When we use only our head, our experience of ourself and the world is more limited. We miss out on the vital information that other "parts" of ourself are giving us.

- **What is your body telling you?** When someone yells at you, does your stomach tie up in knots? Do your shoulders stiffen when you've been too focused on fulfilling others' needs and ignoring your own? Notice the messages your body is giving you.
- **Check in with your heart.** The heart is the home of what is most alive in us. What does your heart have to say about your job? What does it say about how you spend your days? Does it need more play time? What, according to your heart, really matters?
- **Listen to your intuition, your "gut."** Your intuition speaks volumes, but often gets ignored. Connect back to a time when you paid attention to what you knew was right, even though you didn't know exactly how you knew it. What is this voice saying now?

Don't forget to notice what you already have that is working. Acknowledge and give thanks for the gifts and the beauty and the miracles that are in your life right now.

Tell the truth. Now is the time to start being honest about who you really are. Encouraging those un-lived parts of ourself to emerge can provide an exhilarating sense of discovery and optimism for the New Year and beyond. ■

"Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens."

—Carl Jung

10 Things We Can Control

We can't control the weather, death or another's thoughts, much as we might like to. But our lives are rich with choices that we make every day. The choices that we make in these 10 important areas are the rudder that steers our life.

- 1. Our actions.** We alone are responsible for what we do.
- 2. Our words.** Spoken or written, the words we choose impact our lives and the lives of others.
- 3. Our beliefs.** Our thoughts, values and beliefs form the basis for all of our emotions. We can change our beliefs.
- 4. Our values.** What's important to us is our call. No one else can tell us what to value.
- 5. Our work.** Although many of us complain of being trapped in a job or profession, we do actually get to choose what our work in the world is.
- 6. Our friends.** Those we associate with say a lot about what we think of ourselves. We can choose to have friends who bring us down or who support us.
- 7. Our input.** We can select our sources of news, turn off televisions and radios, and /or ignore advertising.
- 8. Our time.** Though it sometimes feels like we have no say, we do choose every day how we will use the 24 hours that a day gives us.
- 9. Our basic health.** We can't control our genetic make-up, but we can choose to exercise, sleep enough, eat healthy food, get routine check-ups, etc.
- 10. Our legacy.** All that we choose while alive—our actions, words, etc.—will become the gift we leave when we die.

A Letter From

Mary Ann Newbold



What's working in your life? What areas need adjustment or letting go? How are you—really?

This year, forget about making New Year's resolutions. Instead, as our cover story suggests, use this beginning of the year to take stock of your life—an honest, non-judgmental reading on where you are compared to where you want to be.

Rather than comparing ourselves to our own goals, many of us get stuck comparing ourselves to others, resulting in envy. Our page 3 feature explores this green-eyed monster and what it is actually telling us about ourselves.

As you do your self-evaluation, it may be helpful to keep track of what you can and cannot control. This issue's Top 10 reminds you to pay attention to the areas in your life that you can actually do something about.

Our quiz this winter helps you check in with yourself about how you handle worry. Through the questions, some possible strategies emerge that can help turn *worry* into *wonder*.

Finally, our back page article explores the effects of little lies, including the ones we tell ourselves. As we endeavor to improve our lives, can we afford the massive amounts of energy that lying requires?

Please do not hesitate to call about these topics or any areas of concern that you may be experiencing. And, check out our new website, www.eapathways.com. Thriving and other information is available to you and your family on line.

Wishing you a peaceful, warm and fulfilling 2003.



How Well Do You Handle Worry?

At its essence, worry is a useful response, helping us anticipate—and avoid—danger by taking constructive action. But too often, worry becomes an endless loop that makes it hard to sleep, focus and perform, and stresses our physical systems. Take this Thriving Quiz to find out how well you handle worry.

True False

- 1. I keep my worries to myself. I'm afraid I'll burden others if I share my concerns. The problem is, then it builds up and I get really stressed.
- 2. I write about my fears in a journal. This takes some of the power out of them. After writing, creative solutions seem to just show up.
- 3. I lie in bed for two or three hours at night worrying, just hoping to fall back asleep. I feel tired all the time.
- 4. Getting involved with my family, friends, church, neighborhood, organizations, etc., gives me a sense of being part of something bigger than myself. When I do that, my worries seem to dissipate.
- 5. I face and take responsibility for problems and commit to a plan of action, rather than worrying about what might happen.
- 6. What really works for me when I'm feeling tense and nervous is to take a long walk, run, bike ride or work out. When I exercise more, I worry less.
- 7. When my worries spin on in an endless loop, I know it's time for a gratitude list. Focusing on the things I am grateful for is like turning my worries inside out.
- 8. My worries seem to come from nowhere, and they feel uncontrollable. When I'm in the grip of them, I feel incapable of coming up with any solutions.
- 9. I worry mostly about things that, in fact, have a very low probability of actually occurring—dying in a plane crash, going bankrupt, etc.
- 10. Rather than let my nighttime thoughts keep me from getting to sleep, I focus on physical sensations, such as the feel of the sheets and the warmth of my own body.
- 11. I try to catch my worrying as close to the beginning as possible. Then I take some time to relax, breathe deeply and get centered.
- 12. When I'm immersed in my worried thoughts, I have, but rarely notice, physical sensations such as speedy heartbeat, sweatiness and shakiness.
- 13. The more repetitive my worrying becomes, the more persuasive it seems.
- 14. I worry about others because I don't really trust that they can take care of themselves. I've noticed, however, that most of the time, they can.
- 15. When I'm concerned about something, I take action. Then I let go, trusting that I've done all I can do.

Shifting your worry to wonder opens up possibilities for curiosity and action rather than dread and immobility. Ask yourself: How will it all turn out? What can I do to make the outcome the best it can be? If you would like to work on worry, trust or any other concerns, please don't hesitate to call.

When Envy Rears Its Ugly Head, Listen to What It Has to Say

When William's neighbor drove up with a new Mercedes sports car, William suddenly felt "less than." *Spoiled little inheritance baby*, William thought. *At least I work for my money.*

Frances pretended to be happy for her friend—who had just landed a lucrative book publishing contract *and* had a new boyfriend—but inside she fumed, ticking off all the reasons her friend didn't deserve either.

Joey's classmate was excitedly telling of his winning soccer goal over the weekend, when Joey interrupted to describe a movie he'd just seen—without even acknowledging his classmate's joyful report.

Envy isn't pretty, is it?

Even on a good day, news of someone else's good fortune can send us spiraling into a pit of bitter—though silent—accusations and weak self-righteousness. It poisons our confidence and undermines our sense of worth. Given enough energy, envy can balloon into outright hate.

But facing this green-eyed monster without flinching can tell you powerful things about yourself—what you really want, what needs to change and what you need to let go. Envy is information. It shows us the good we thirst for and points out our mistaken belief that good is out of our reach.

"It's really our getting mad at ourselves," says Debrena Jackson Gandy, author of *All the Joy You Can Stand*. "The other person is the character stand-in. It's about not being okay with where you are."

It's not the movie star or the seven-figure executive we envy but those closest to us in age, profession and life situation.

Frances was working in a low-paying office job, with no love in her life, when her friend called with her good news. Frances examined her envy and discovered that it wasn't about her friend, but that she was really feeling unfulfilled, stuck and lonely. Underneath that, she believed that fulfillment and love could

never happen for her.

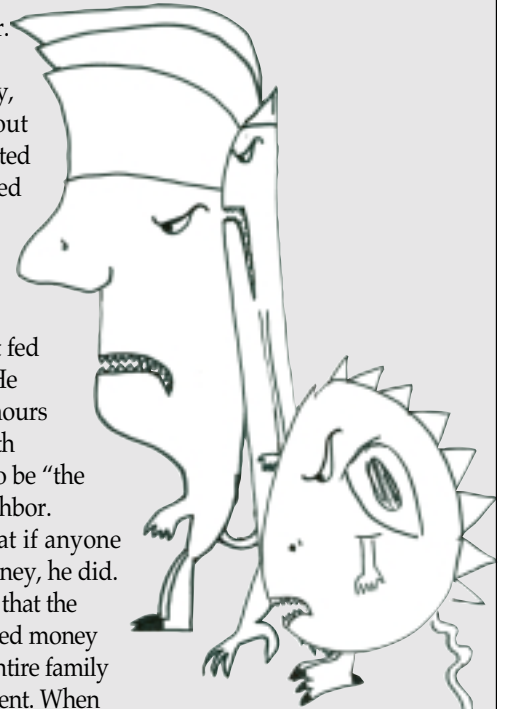
Thanks to the guiding light of envy, Frances thought about what she really wanted in her life and decided to start her own business and join a singles group.

For William, it was entitlement that fed his green monster. He compared his long hours of physical labor with what he perceived to be "the easy life" of his neighbor. William thought that if anyone deserved lots of money, he did.

He later learned that the neighbor had inherited money as a child, after his entire family died in a plane accident. When William looked at his life, he realized he loved his work trimming trees and felt blessed to have a healthy and alive family. Acknowledging the goodness and grace abundant in his life helped him free himself from envy's grip.

Joey's parents helped him to see the envy in his ignoring his classmate's good news. It got him in touch with his need for competence in the sport he liked best, basketball. After that, Joey shot hoops every day and improved his skills to the point that he made the all-star team the following year.

As writer Bertrand Russell put it, "Where envy is unavoidable, it must be used as a stimulus to one's own efforts, not to the thwarting of the efforts of rivals." ■



Taming the Monster

Acknowledging envy's power in our life opens the first door to the treasure that envy so closely guards. Here are some steps to take to tame this monster and gain access to its gold.

- **Have the courage to catch yourself.** As awful as it may seem, let yourself fully feel the needs, desires, longings and yearnings behind your envy. Recognizing this begins to open you to the good that you seek.
- **Ask yourself: What brings me joy?** Be very specific about what fulfills you in key areas of your life (finances, career, health, relationships, family, etc.). What actions can you take to make your life the way you want it to be?
- **Tell the truth.** What have you done to further your own dreams and goals? Or, are you, perhaps, aspiring to goals that really aren't yours?
- **Destroy all your yardsticks.** In other words, don't compare. How do you feel about yourself and where you

are? If you're happy and satisfied with your life, it doesn't matter what someone else has or does.

- **Count your blessings.** When we feel envious, we often discount the good that is in our life already. Notice what fortune life has bestowed upon you and express it. Do you have use of all four limbs? A warm bed to sleep in? Make a gratitude list to post around the house or keep in your wallet.
- **Let go, when necessary.** If you are 5' 4" and have brown eyes, you will never be 6' 2" with green eyes. This kind of envy is a true waste of time. Put it where it belongs: in the "waste" basket.
- **Trust life's abundance.** Envy often stems from the unconscious belief that when someone else gets something good, there's one less for us—one less wonderful man or woman, one less good job. Every time you feel envy, remind yourself that there is enough good in the world for you to have some, too. ■

Even Little Lies Keep Us From Growing in Ways We Need

The Truth About Lies

"Always tell the truth. That way, you don't have to remember what you said." —Mark Twain

When it comes to lies—especially small, everyday kinds of lies—Mark Twain's advice is right on the money.

Lies always exact an emotional toll. They take energy to maintain and keep us from growing in ways that we need to, but may find uncomfortable.

They often have a way of backfiring, too, with one fib leading to another and ultimately "costing" us more than just energy. An inaccurate résumé may cost us a job offer, or a "touched up" image may cost us a new relationship.

Most important, lies keep us from experiencing each other's humanity and vulnerability—and our own.

For it is the truth that moves people. And it is the truth that we tell ourselves that moves us to improve our lives, not cling to our lies.

Below is a guide to everyday lies. In each category, think of an example in your life and rework the scenario using the truth. You might be surprised at the results.

Excuses

We give false excuses all the time: why we're late, why we must refuse an invitation, why we didn't call back, why we didn't show up, why the work isn't done.

What would happen if you told the

truth? For example: "I just can't muster the courage to come to your party because I know my ex and her new husband will be there, and I'm still tender over our break-up."

In revealing yourself to the host, you invite empathy and perhaps support for the real emotions of grief after the ending of a relationship—emotions that everyone can relate to and understand. Also, you remain trustworthy in the eyes of the host.

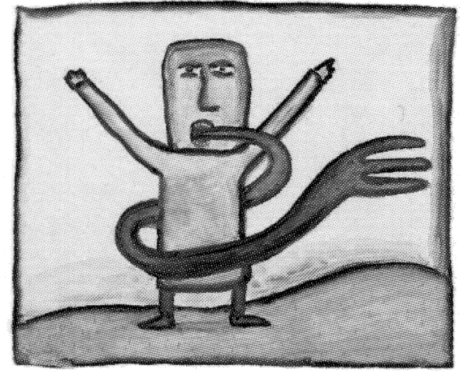
Shifting Blame

Bending the truth to avoid responsibility is rampant and devastating in both professional and personal life. No other kind of lie poisons relationships in quite the same way. And by blaming another, named or nameless, we cover up areas that we might need to work on, places in our lives that need to change for us to move forward.

The most common motivations for this kind of blame shifting are fear and insecurity. When we don't believe we deserve a second chance, we lie instead of admitting we've erred. Imagine the power of saying: "I'm responsible." It's not unusual to receive appreciation, rather than criticism, for taking responsibility.

Image Touch-Ups

Whether it's dropping a few years from your age or creating fictional life experiences and skills, this kind of lie usually involves those things about which



we're most insecure—age, weight, education, salary, job credentials.

As we grow in our ability to appreciate ourselves and as we work with intention on areas we wish to improve, these kinds of embellishments decline. Higher self-esteem means we don't have to be perfect or fascinating or striking to be lovable.

Omitting the Truth

Lying by withholding information can be damaging to the person who is being misled. For example, not telling a prospective business partner that you went bankrupt in the last two businesses you owned could lead the person to make a decision she might later regret.

It might also prevent you from taking steps to acquire more financial management skills or to examine whether self-employment is right for you.

Lying is a draining, negative way to use our brain and skills. It demands huge amounts of emotional energy, which we'd be much better off using to improve our life. ■