

How to Have Your Best Year – Every Year.

A Workbook by Ann Hawkins

For a quick but effective insight, work through these ten questions and then, if you have a significant other in your life or business, ask them to do the same. This will serve two purposes: If you spot any conflicts you can try to resolve them before they become obstacles and you should both end up being able to help each other to stay on track. This will significantly improve your chances of achieving your goals and you will have someone to celebrate with!

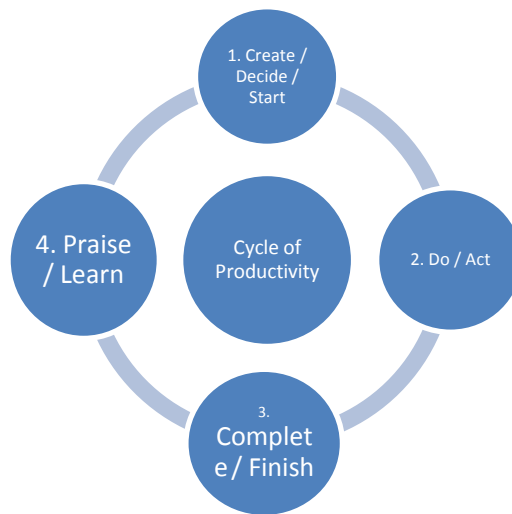
Some people like to start using this workbook at the start of a year and it is certainly much more effective than making New Year resolutions but it is just as effective if you do it at any time the year when you feel it's time to make some changes.

1. What was your biggest accomplishment last year?
2. What were your biggest disappointments last year?
3. What did you learn from the year just past?
4. How do you limit yourself and how can you stop doing it?
5. What are your personal values?
6. What roles do you play in your life?
7. Which roles will be your major focus for next year?
8. What are your goals for each role?
9. What are your top three goals for the next 12 months?
10. How can you make sure you achieve your top goals?

1. What did you accomplish last year?

In the cycle of productivity we often find a pattern of getting stuck at some point in the process.

You might be good at Step One - Starting but not at Step Three - Finishing. You might plan but don't do Step Two – Act. The most common situation is when we miss out Step 4 and don't take time to learn and, more importantly, give ourselves praise for what we've accomplished.



Now is your chance to use Step Four and praise yourself for what you've accomplished. You're allowed to celebrate. Don't compare your achievements with anyone else's. What is small for you might be HUGE for someone else and vice-versa. This is not a contest it's just about YOU. If you are finding it hard to give yourself a pat on the back take a minute to wonder why.

What was your biggest accomplishment last year?

Stand in front of a mirror and pretend you are on a stage or in a marketplace with a megaphone, shout your accomplishments to the world. Brag like no-one is listening!

Think about how that feels and if you are more comfortable beating yourself up than giving yourself praise. Practice praising yourself in private and then with a friend until it feels more comfortable.

2. What were your biggest disappointments last year?

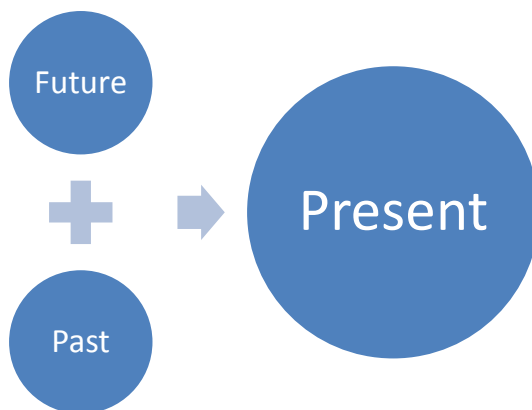
When did you disappoint yourself? When did others disappoint you? What happened that was not in your control? You don't have to show this to anyone so be honest with yourself. It's not about beating yourself up but about looking at how you handled things. If you find it easier to criticise than to praise yourself, ask why. Are you hanging on to any resentment or anger or have you let it go?

This is all about perception and especially about letting go of things you can't change. Whatever has happened is over. You can learn from it but you can't change it so don't let it use any of the energy you can use to enjoy the present moment or create a better future.

It can sometimes be hard to stop thinking of the past and focus on the future without a nagging voice suggesting that you'll make the same mistakes again.

An easier way to move away from anything that is anchoring you to past mistakes is to focus on what is happening right now. We can't control the past or the future but we can control the way we think and feel in the present moment, in *every* present moment and that is where we have real power.

Compared to our past and future, the present moment is the smallest sliver of time we have but it is the biggest in terms of the power to create change.



3. What did you learn from the year just past?

What worked and why? What didn't work and why?

Complete the following exercise but be sure to do in this order

- a) List the things you'd like to **START** doing.

- b) List the things you'd like to **KEEP** doing.

- c) List the things you'd like to **STOP** doing.

Pretend you're someone else – look at what you achieved, at the things that disappointed you and the things you've learned. What advice would you give you – without judgement?

Choose three of the most important things you've learned from the past year.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

4. How do you limit yourself and how can you stop doing it?

Have a look at some of the things you've decided you'd like to start doing and ask why you haven't started them before.

There may be many reasons to do with circumstances and timing and other people in your life but how many of these reasons are really excuses? Have you been holding yourself back?

If so, why?

Did you get a benefit from limiting yourself? Did it make life easier or less scary?

Did you avoid conflict or pressure? Did you avoid failing or avoid potential success and its implications?

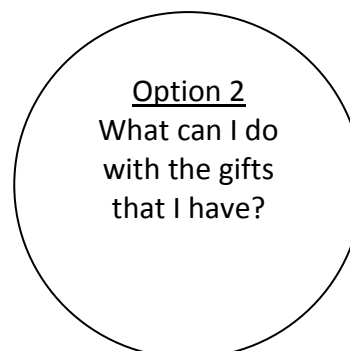
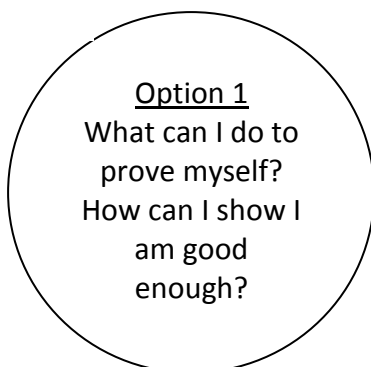
What do you think you've lost by limiting yourself?

For some people this can include a sense of fulfilment, self-respect, good relationships, good health, money, fun and a lot more.

Fear is the biggest limiting factor in most people's lives. Most fears are about imagined events that never actually happen. What is it that you are most afraid of? What stories do you habitually tell yourself? What kind of self-image do you have of the sort of person you are? What would happen if you told yourself a different story and believed it?

The most important question here is: "Are you willing to stop limiting yourself?" If there are fears associated with doing what you really want to do, bring them into the open and see if they are real or imagined.

Consider these two versions of thinking about the way to live your life. How much better it would be to get into the habit of always using Option 2!



5. What are your personal values?

Your values are your personal principles or standards – your judgement of what is important in your life.

If the things you want to do are in conflict with your values you'll be in a permanent state of frustration.

One of the easiest ways of figuring out your values is to imagine you are somehow able to observe your own funeral and think about the things you'd most like to hear people say about you. How do you want to be remembered? How can you make your life be about living to these values? Authenticity and integrity are essential elements in creating a happy and successful life according to your values.

Many people measure a successful life by the things they own. One way to ensure you are living according to your values is to figure out the kind of person you want to BE, the things you need to DO to be that person, and finally, the things that this might bring you.

Complete the details here.

I want to:

Be	<input type="text"/>
Do	<input type="text"/>
Have	<input type="text"/>

6. What roles do you play in your life?

We hear a lot about work/life balance but what does this really mean to you?

The balance between work and the rest of your life is unlikely to ever be in perfect balance. The most power we have is when we can CHOOSE how we spend our time rather than feel we have no control.

Everyone has many roles they play in life and they change as circumstances change.

List all the roles you currently play – in no particular order – and then assess how well you play each one on a scale of 1-10.

Note the ones you'd like to drop and the ones you'd like to add and the ones you'd like to do better.

These include family and personal roles as well as business roles e.g., parent, sibling, child, fundraiser, artist, musician, business owner, friend, writer.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Performance level on a scale of 1-10</u>

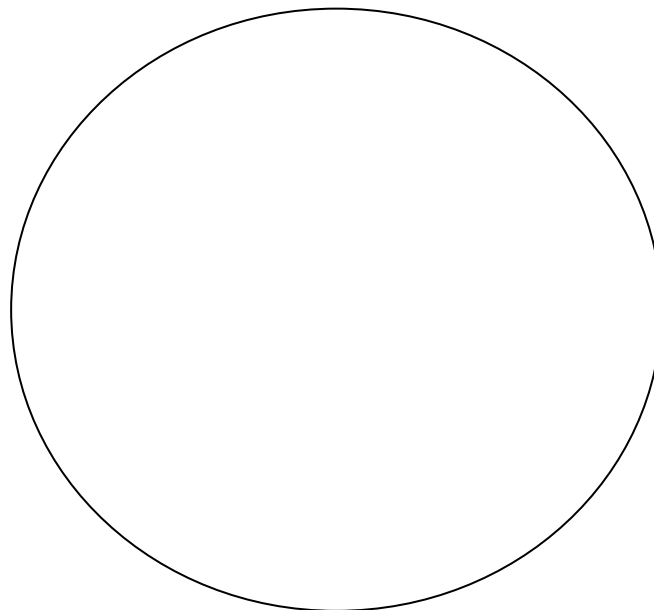
7. Which roles will be your major focus for next year?

Imagine you are in a helicopter looking down at everything you do in your life spread out beneath you. There will be some things that dominate the picture and some things that are in the background.

Decide where you would like or need to put more attention next year. Acknowledge that you have only so many hours in a day and that your first priority must be to taking care of yourself. This is not a selfish decision but equivalent to the airline notice that says “put the oxygen mask on **yourself** before helping others”. If you are not taking care of yourself you become a liability.

Note any conflicts and then decide which roles will be your major focus for next year, thinking how this will fit into a long term life plan.

Imagine the circle below is your whole life. Divide it up into the roles you want to play next year, allocating the right amount of space according to **importance**.



8. What are your goals for each role?

Take the ten most important roles that you have identified and write a goal for each one for the coming year.

At this stage you may be thinking “I’ve set goals before and not achieved them so what’s the point?” There are many systems and methods of goal setting and many myths and legends too.

Your actions need to fit with your values and preferably, become new habits. It may be useful to think of goals in these two very different ways.

A **RESULT** oriented goal would be to lose one stone in weight by a particular date. This can sometimes result in embarking on a plan of action that you hate and you have to grit your teeth every day to move closer to your goal.

A **PROCESS** oriented goal would be to eat healthily and exercise every day and because you focus on the process you are more likely to choose one that you enjoy and can turn into a new life habit. An important point about this is that however much you want the result, if you hate the process you are unlikely to succeed. Finding a process that is enjoyable is the best way to achieve any goal.

Role	Goal
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Review each goal and, if necessary, re-write them until you have a list that you are genuinely happy that you can achieve.

Don’t kid yourself by setting goals you’re unlikely to achieve – that is just setting yourself up for failure - but don’t undersell yourself either.

Dig down into any doubts or worries and make sure that the way you plan to achieve each goal is in line with your personal values.

9. What are your top three goals?

By now you've probably gathered that "How to have your best year yet" isn't just about setting some business goals.

It's really about unearthing your big lifetime goals and the things that might be holding you back from fulfilling your potential, using your skills and talents in accordance with your personal values and getting closer to leading a life of integrity and satisfaction.

If your lifetime goals are clear, making short term goals for the coming year and every future year that will take you closer to them will provide satisfaction in itself.

From the goals you've identified for each role, choose the ones that will make the most difference to your life. Keep checking back and revising the list until you have a list that thrills and excites you. If your list causes you doubts and worries dig up the reasons. Be honest with yourself and if you really can't see yourself achieving a particular goal cross it out and replace it.

There is no 'should' about this list. It's about what you truly 'want' and no-one's judgement is involved except your own.

What you are looking for here are the things that will make up the best year of your life so far – not your best year ever. What you don't do this year can go on the list for next year so that each year becomes the best year so far.

Identifying your top three goals will give you a clear focus and a way to get started. It will also help with day to day decision making. Every time you are faced with a dilemma about what action to take ask yourself "Will this take me closer or further away from my most important goals?"

1
2
3

This is a good time to reflect that no-one can make changes without affecting the people around them and the environment in which they live.

Identify who will be most affected by the changes you want to make and make sure they are aware, in agreement and ideally, supportive.

10. How can you make sure you achieve your top goals?

Just writing down goals will not get results.

Just making a plan will not get results.

Just thinking positive thoughts will not get results.

Consistent action coupled with a firm belief is most likely to get the results you want but even then, circumstances outside of your control may influence what happens.

You can't control what happens but you can control how you react to it.

Your plan to achieve your goals needs to be a living breathing part of every second of your life. Every decision you make will take you nearer or further away from achieving your goals. Achieving your goals is not something you do *as well as* doing everything else in your life. Achieving your goals is about the way you live every moment.

If your goals are consistent with your values and the roles you play in your life the changes you make will lead naturally to the end you have in mind.

Planning to achieve your goals.

Most things happen without a plan. Many of them are good things: friendships, falling in love, finding great music, food or art, or things that make you laugh. Spontaneity and serendipity are important.

However, if you want to achieve particular goals it means making space in your life for what really matters and taking action by doing things you enjoy.

When you create good, sustainable habits that you enjoy, you'll end up with a life you are proud of.

You don't have to do alone.

It's been said you are a combination of the 5 people you spend most time with.

Look at the people who you hang out with all of the time - your eating habits, overall health, wealth, and levels of success are all likely to be similar. What does this mean for you?

It means you *are* who you hang out with.

If you want to change, you might need to associate with different people.

There are four crucial people that you need to have on your team in order to make the changes you've identified:

A Mentor – This is someone you know who has had success in the areas in which you want to be successful. If you're unfit and want to be healthy and strong, find somebody who used to be unfit and is now healthy and strong and find out how they did it. (Remember you have to like the process or it won't work for you). If you want to earn more, learn to sing, open a shop, win a medal, find somebody who has had that experience and learn EVERYTHING you can about how they did it.

A Buddy – This is someone who is struggling with the same things, working on the same stuff as you. When you have a bad day, this person knows exactly how you feel. Because you're both striving for the same goals, you have somebody to bounce ideas around with, share triumphs and struggles with. **Caution:** don't take the buddy support as far as going down the plughole together. Understanding that it's hard doesn't mean you support each other in giving up.

A Student – The BEST way to get better at something is to teach it to somebody else. If you think you need to be an expert in order to teach, think of expertise on a scale of 1- 100. If you're a 5 you can help out the 1-4's. Find somebody that needs help, maybe a co-worker or friend who wants to do what you're doing and teach them how to get started. As you get better and learn from your mentor, you can then compare and share this with your buddy and then help teach it to your student.

A Cheerleader – This is the person who will always be in your corner, cheering you on. They'll believe in you more than you believe in yourself, have high expectations, keep you on your toes, push you outside of your comfort zone, make you try new things, not let you settle for less, dust you off when you fall and push you back out there.

The best year of your life is within reach if you focus on creating new habits. The first step is to begin.

When you've decided on your three most important goals for the next 12 months, share them with me or someone who will help you to make a plan and stick to it.

Knowledge, support and accountability are the three things that will have the biggest impact on your success!