

New Year's Resolutions: Try Thinking Outside the Box

Do you do resolutions? Do you stick to them? Writer Donna Lynn Rhodes has hit on a way to make resolutions, stick to them and get more of what she wants out of life.

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Get fit. Lose weight. Manage stress. Quit smoking, drinking and overspending.

According to USA.gov, these are the most popular New Year's resolutions. And guess what? A whopping 97 percent of them are not fulfilled. That doesn't surprise anyone – least of all those who made the resolution — because they never expected to keep it.

So why even bother? Why not just look forward to the new year as a *new* start to our already bad habits?

Well, that's no fun. How can we measure our success if we don't try to raise the bar at least once a year?

I am happy to say that I am part of the 3 percent who actually kept my resolution. Really. And what's more, I am making the same resolution this year and plan to raise the bar even higher.

So what, pray tell, was it? My resolution was to do one thing out of my comfort zone every month. That's right. And I succeeded by stepping out of the box 10 times in 12 months. What did I do that's so special? I'll tell you.

I ate an apple. I always thought I hated apples. I know that's so un-American, and I had a bushel of reasons why I didn't like them. But when the new food market opened at Target, and it was grab a cart and grab an apple, well I grabbed the chance. It was a Delicious and it was delicious and I've been eating them ever since.

Mount Diablo. What about it? I've lived in Walnut Creek 28 years and I finally went to the top. It's not that I'm afraid of heights — I was scared I was going to puke the entire way up. But when I unexpectedly and quite literally came to the end of the Northgate Road, I faced my fears, waved to the park ranger and reached for the sky.

And, speaking of driving on the highway of my comfort zone, I've never driven more than three hours at one time. Never. I like to drive and I'm very well traveled, I just seem to fly everywhere. Well, the gears shifted this year when a family emergency and the logistics surrounding it meant I needed to drive to Arizona in a day. And drive I did — 11 of the 13 hours it took my friend and me to get there.

Vanity Plates: You know, those personalized license plates you either love or hate. It's something I'd thought about doing since I moved here, but never had the nerve. Now that I own my own marketing company, [donnalynn Creative](#), I thought this was another way to market my business and drive my success. See if you can spot me zipping around town. Going outside my comfort zone means having to mingle in large groups of people or even worse, being the main speaker. Those who know me can't believe there's a shy bone in my body — but there is. In a group, I tend to attach myself to one person or one corner. I stepped out three times — three major times.

For starters, I joined the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce and actually went to a few — OK, maybe one — events. But here's where I really stepped outside the box: I volunteered to do Career Day at a Walnut Creek middle school and high school. When I finished my presentation, I don't know who was more blown away, me or the kids. I actually got a standing ovation. They wanted to stay and ask more questions and some said I changed their life and gave it direction. The girls hugged me and the boys said 'Thank you.'

Going from one age extreme to the other, a few months later I volunteered to teach a computer class to a group of senior citizens. I may have been the teacher at this "Green Apple Mac Club," but I probably learned just as much — if not more — than they did.

I bet you can do a spreadsheet in your sleep. Well *Little Miss Right Brain* here never could. But, after many starts and stops, I actually did one. My friend set it up for me and I have been keeping track of all the stories I've been writing and covering for Walnut Creek Patch. Every time I fill in a cell or add a row, I get giddy.

Mastering a simple spreadsheet gave me the confidence to sign up for online banking. What the heck was I waiting for? No more stamps and very few checks – and knowing exactly where my money goes every month – what a concept.

That brings us to No. 10. In addition to my marketing company, I am now a writer for Patch – and even have my own column. My family and friends always said I should write a book or be a stand-up comic and with *Off the Beaten Patch*, I get to do a little of both.

What about you? What are your New Year's resolutions?

I liked making and keeping last year's resolution so much that I'm making the same one this year: Step outside of my comfort zone. Does that mean I'll finally sign up for J-Date or run a half marathon? Who knows? But don't be surprised if I scale Half Dome while tasting a pear.

I'll let you know. Same time next year.