



A New Year's Resolution

EVERY YEAR, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE GRAB A PEN AND PAPER and begin the list that never seems to make it past March: New Year's Resolutions. This year, keep it simple with just four words. Read on ...

It was my daughter's 16th birthday, and what better way to celebrate a birthday in December than to spend it in the most magical place on Earth during Christmas — New York City. As our plane touched down, we were both excited with the anticipation of the lights, Macy's infamous window displays, Rockefeller Center and our jam-packed weekend itinerary.

Walking the streets with all its hustle and bustle, along with the crisp smell of winter mingling with the smell of hot pretzels from the street vendors, only added to our Christmas spirit. During the day, we jostled shopping bags and hailed taxis when we got tired of walking — and FAO Schwarz's candy counter was no match for us. At dinner, we sat beneath a huge Christmas tree with the warmth of the indoors and savored the smells of the surrounding tables.



Sunday brought a steady drizzle and the sky grayed over as we made our way through Bryant Park to catch our car to the airport. As we stepped out of the ivy-covered restaurant bedecked with big, red velvet bows, the crowd engulfed us. I grabbed my daughter's hand and led her down the walkway. As I was searching for my gloves, I heard, "Can you spare some change?" With the voices of the crowd, I almost missed her whisper. I stopped and turned around to see a small, stout, gray-haired woman standing in the middle of the sidewalk, head hung down, whispering to people as they passed. No one seemed to notice her. I dug into my purse and walked over to her and handed her a few dollars. We exchanged *God bless yous*, and I returned to where I had left my daughter.

We took a few steps forward and, in unison, turned back around to see her, head hung down, her chin trembling. I handed my daughter some more money and watched as she returned to the woman. The woman looked up as my daughter walked away and waved at me. At that moment, I knew what Christmas meant. I approached her and noticed her pants were three sizes too big and her overcoat was held together in the front with a huge safety pin. As I stood there, she looked up at me with questioning eyes; and then I reached down and hugged her. It took her a second, and then her arms reached up and hugged me back. Holding me to her, she whispered, "Merry Christmas."

This one lone, homeless woman taught me several life lessons that rainy morning that I invite you all to take with you in the coming year. They are the oldies but goodies and worth repeating: faith, hope, love and gratitude. Keep these ever present and you will be able to rise above anything life throws your way.

Wishing you all the very best in 2024!

DEBBIE MARTINEZ, MA, is a certified life coach specializing in divorce. As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. You can reach Debbie at 305.984.5121, transformationthrudivorce.com or debbie@transformationthrudivorce.com.

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