

# Three Basic Ways to Start Anew in 2016

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While some divorced individuals may have glided through the recent holiday season with ease, many did not. In fact, the holidays tend to amplify the “good” memories of a former spouse — or “bad” ones — and either way, such thoughts tend to cause some degree of emotional pain as these memories are revisited. The holidays also raise tensions over custody issues and cause friction between former and new family members. Instead of looking forward to, or enjoying the holidays, many divorced people do whatever they can to simply “plow” through them; a mindset they gear up for every year. It becomes a habit. When the New Year’s Eve glitter vanishes, they typically dust themselves off and go right back to whatever routine they had before the advent of it all—that Thanksgiving blitz.

Whether recently divorced, or apart for a long period of time, congratulating yourself for having simply gotten through the holidays is not enough. What is more important is to prompt change in one’s life so that each holiday season becomes less and less painful. What better way to do that than to make small, but permanent and effective changes; what better time to put them into play than during the month of January.

Forget all those complicated New Year’s resolutions, try some simple steps. The following are three very basic ways to take those steps, none of which take much effort or money, but rather a willingness to think “differently,” along with a resolve to get busy making some basic, every day changes. All of these suggestions, can catapult you forward into a new phase. A new you. Your first assignment is to think: “New!”

1. Food: Change your diet. No, this does not mean a weight loss program. It means reconsidering the food choices you consume every day. If you find yourself “automatic grocery shopping,” that is, buying those foods you and your former spouse shared week in and week out (those that had become “tradition”) don’t throw them in the basket the next time you grocery shop. Change it up. Opt for substitutes for everything you buy. Instead of pie choose cake. Rather than romaine lettuce, grab kale. Forget the sourdough. Snatch up a loaf of whole grain. Get off the bananas. Pick up strawberries or melon. Forego the Charmin and buy Angel Soft. Believe it or not, the grocery store choices you shared with your ex are deep-seated reminders of your life together (whether you split up recently or long ago) and something you don’t give much thought to when going on a grocery spree. You just throw things in the basket, as usual. Make it your goal to score a touchdown at the checkout stand next time you’re doing that chore, with a grocery basket of all new items — your own personal choices that have nothing to do with your ex, think “new.”

2. Shelter: Can't move? It would be best if you could, but if you can't afford to, redecorate. Re-arrange every single room in that house! Don't forget the bathroom(s). If the two of you preferred traditional, try modern. If the kitchen nook table is where you convened for meals, make it a new custom to use that often-empty dining room as your new eating quarters. (For most, the formal or dedicated dining room is one of the least used spaces in the house.) Enjoy it! If the kitchen was white and black, find another color scheme, like taupe and gray. Re-stain the cupboards. If budget permits, change out the appliances. Replace the flooring. The window coverings. You can make dramatic changes to your everyday environs by just rearranging furniture or switching color schemes. Can't afford a new sofa for the great room? Splurge on some new throw pillows to toss on it. Each room will need a new "personality." Yours! Take a room at a time and change everything you can about it. That could also include artwork to window coverings to eating on the "good" dishes. Change. It's all about change. With change you get renewal.

3. Clothing: Any reminders of your ex in the way of coats, sweaters, jeans, shoes? Some people hold on to many such apparel items for years! It's time to say goodbye to these old standbys and/or rearrange or restock your closet. For instance, those molded-to-your-feet hiking boots she bought you that seem to fit better every year when you slip them on, or the snuggly robe he surprised you with that you've totally worn out, but still find comfy, is yet another reminder that he/she remains in your life. It's time to completely let go. Give spring cleaning a whole new meaning and do it in January! Your objective this New Year is to find substitutes with which to fill that closet. Arrange it according to colors. Change the linen closet to the sweater closet. You get the idea. Think "new!" Think: No reminders! Shed the old. Bring in the new!

If you have children, they will fully enjoy helping you with all the activities related to making these refreshing changes. It's easy to get stuck in a rut. Easy to do things the same 'ole way, especially those daily habits. Get extremely creative when going about these basic changes. Not only will you feel "brand new," you will also boost your confidence and self-esteem by taking control and not letting those holiday "blues" keep you down. By doing this "basics" exercise: reformatting Food, Shelter, Clothing, you will shed yourself of many of the negative feelings you experienced over the recent holiday period. The New Year is meant to signify beginnings. Beginnings portend of hope. That commodity is what most divorced individuals need most, because frankly, I do not know of one client who has not suffered some kind of angst over the holiday season. Effecting change in the areas I mentioned — as simple and basic as they may be, each and every year if you have to — is truly refreshing.

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