



Is It Time for New Year's Eve Already?

Is it possible that another year is about to end? Wasn't it two weeks ago that I put away the holiday decorations from last year? I can still smell pine needles in the vacuum

cleaner. I haven't even finished breaking all of my resolutions from last year yet. Don't get me wrong. I love the holidays. There are never too many parties or too much hubbub for me. I don't even mind the 500 million tourists that visit New York City this time of year, walking down Fifth Avenue five-abreast, arms linked, smoking, and blocking all pedestrian traffic! Yet each year seems to pass more quickly than the one before, and I find myself annually reevaluating if I am spending my time in a rewarding way, both personally and professionally.

Perhaps you share some of these feelings. What can we do to carve out in our personal histories the unique nature of our lives, year by year? What will 2004 signify for you in 20 years? Personal reflection is a natural reaction to the end of another calendar year and provides us with the opportunity of a fresh start. I have kept a journal for most of my life and love to read the published journals of others. One of my favorite books on the subject is *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries* by Thomas Mallon (Penguin, 1984). Mallon writes about a young woman, Laurel Lee, who kept a diary about her struggle with Hodgkin disease and who criticized some of her nurses in this manner: "I found what seemed like tender concern from a nurse would elicit my tender confidence, only to find it distorted and recorded for the hospital world. I felt betrayed and limited their probes to the external" (p. 101). I often have had similar thoughts when I charted the emotional distress that some of my patients have verbalized over the years. What insights might you gain by rereading your own journal entries every few years?

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Whether reviewing our personal journals, taking a long walk on a snowy morning, or letting our thoughts wander freely while on the treadmill, this time of year is conducive to introspection. During an average week, what percentage of time do you spend doing things for yourself? This should not include housework, cooking, grocery shopping, cleaning the litter box, etc., even though doing these chores will greatly improve your quality of life! Do your time allotments match your priorities? Would you describe your career as challenging—and fulfilling? Are your personal relationships uplifting and encouraging, or are you spending time with people who are demoralizing and bring down your spirits?

If you are dissatisfied with the progress of your personal story, particularly in terms of your career, create a to-do list (note that I am not calling it New Year's Resolutions, as we all know what happens to those). What will it take for you to feel excited about your career? Recall some of the major career transitions that you have experienced to date and the excitement that you felt. I often think of the day that I defended my doctoral dissertation. When my wonderfully compassionate and enlightened dissertation chair, Patricia Winstead-Fry, PhD, called me Dr. Griffin for the first time, I fell to my knees crying with sheer joy—and relief! The exhilaration of achievement is one of the few pure pleasures in life and serves to inspire us onward and upward.

I am being boldly self-serving here, but why not challenge yourself by writing an article? Certainly you have many ideas and opinions about nursing care, and you can be



assured that other nurses would like to hear them. This issue includes an article about geriatric oncology, perhaps prompting you to think about other unique aspects of caring for older patients with cancer. How does nursing care of a 90-year-old man with metastatic

prostate cancer, diabetes, and renal failure differ from that of a 50-year-old man with diabetes with the same cancer? The articles on developing patient education materials and specific aspects of pain management also may give you insights on topics. What sorts of projects have you participated in that have helped you to facilitate patient care? The article examining the evidence base behind care of patients with neutropenia will, hopefully, cause you to search carefully for evidence supporting the nursing interventions you conduct each and every day.

Whatever the topic, share your knowledge with the rest of us. Perhaps you would like to collaborate with someone—an advanced practice nurse, a faculty member who might have students on your unit, or a new graduate full of fresh ideas. Get together over dinner, have some fun, and set a schedule for yourself—initial draft completed by the end of February and manuscript submitted by the end of March, for instance. Recharge those frazzled neurons and reactivate your writing skills. Between writing 50-page care plans and charting using checks and half sentences back in nursing school, the writing skills that you had as a youth may need to be resurrected. Just get started! Because, don't look now, but 2006 is almost here!

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/04.CJON.579