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January 7, 2012

# RESOLUTIONS

So how are you doing with your New Year's resolutions? The hard part about change isn't knowing what we need to do --- it's knowing what to let go of that is the real problem.

Many years ago we used to skydive out of some very small aircraft – the kind with the wing on top. On this trip we had a first jump student --- a football player size guy. On this kind of plane the door is on the right and you put your left foot on the step and you hold on with both hands to the strut and you stare ahead at the propeller that is just a couple of feet in front of you. Your right leg just kind of flops in the wind. I was in the back of the plane and watched as this guy got out and into position reasonably smoothly. So far so good. When it's time to let go, the Jumpmaster very unceremoniously signals you by whacking you in the thigh. There is no mistaking the 'signal'. Even after repeated 'signals' this guy was not going to let go. This creates a dilemma. The pilot is anxious about wasting fuel, the Jumpmaster knows that we can't land with him hanging out there and the poor guy just wants it all to go away but if he doesn't let go he can neither climb back into the aircraft or make his jump. Eventually he was persuaded by the Jumpmaster to let go and get back inside. Actually I think 'hailed back in' is a more accurate description of what really happened.

My brother has a remarkably simple system that keeps his closets from overflowing ---- he has the discipline to know that any time he adds a new item of clothing that he needs to give away an old item. If he buys/receives a sweater he makes room for the new one by giving an old one away. That is real discipline!

of us don't like to let go of what is familiar --- and as a consequence we hang onto a great many things that get in our way.

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting with a delightful 99 year old woman who was thinking about moving to our assisted living. There was no urgency, just an acknowledgement that as things change it makes sense to consider different options for the future. She loved what she saw – but was also understandably saddened at the thought of what she would be leaving behind.

It was inspiring to me to see my 99 year old friend consider all the alternatives, realize that in order to get the security and socialization that she wanted that it would mean giving something up – and that while letting go of what is known is difficult and a little scary – that it is the best thing to do. This week she moved in. Having let go now frees her to enjoy things that she couldn't have imagined before. I am lucky in being able to see this play out time and time again. It is a difficult decision – but once it is made things start to get better right away!

Sometimes it takes courage to let go of the strut so that you can skydive. Sometimes it takes discipline to not buy something without giving something away. Sometimes it takes the faith to know that we can put ourselves in a better situation – if we can let go of our present situation. Most often it takes all three - - Courage, Discipline and Faith – not to know what to choose --- but to be able to let go! We can't move ahead unless we first let go.

As important as it is to know what we want --- it is as important to know what holds us back. For me a good resolution always includes writing down not just what we intend to do --- but also what we will no longer do. Make no mistake about it --- Letting go is the difficult part!

Best Wishes for a Wonderful 2012!

Age Well!

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