

5 New Year's Resolutions for Ambitious Women

How to Make 2009 a Year of Clarity

Story by Ann Daly

(Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from Ann Daly's new ebook, *A Year of Clarity: The Monthly Guide for Women*, available online at www.ann Daly.com.)

LOVE THE NEW YEAR. IT'S A BRAND-NEW START.

An automatic "do-over."

I love to begin the New Year fresh, with renewed ambition to live my life as large as possible. Otherwise, what's the point?

And as I approach the 50-year mark, I greet the New Year with even more of a sense of expectation. I don't know about you, but each of my days streak by at an alarming pace. I'm barely out of bed when I find myself back under the covers again. There is not a single hour to squander.

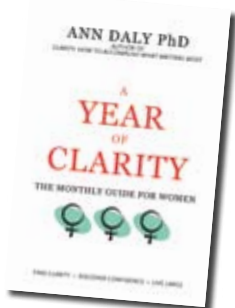
As a coach, I serve as the privileged witness to so many remarkable women who feel the same way. They are consciously crafting their lives with love, attention and imagination. They are committing to a life of clarity, meaning and accomplishment.

We are all hungry for that life, and 2009 is the year you can make it yours – whether your ambition is for the C-suite, work-life balance or a creative calling. How? I recommend the following five New Year's resolutions.

MORE INFO

Join life coach Ann Daly, PhD to discuss these and other New Year's strategies for ambitious women. Bring your questions to "Ask the Coach."

"Ask the Coach"
January 29 – 7 p.m.
BookWoman
5501 N. Lamar, A-105
512.472.2785



1. Tame the Female Ego

If men feel the need to be in control, women feel the need to please. I'm learning more and more about women's disease-to-please in my coaching practice, and I've come to the conclusion that it is, at bottom, an ego thing.

Women learn from a very young age that they will reap great psychic rewards for being perceived by others as pleasant and accommodating. Those rewards feed our ego. "How wonderful she is – so selfless and generous!"

As a mature adult, however, it is our task to establish an identity based not on the perceptions of others but on our own drives and desires. If I'm still stuck in the rewards of being "a good girl," then I won't have the strength to be who I am meant to be in this world. Unfortunately, our culture is still invested in docile women, and it takes a conscious act of will – maybe even defiance, for some women – to take action and make choices based on our own internal imperatives rather than external gratification.

How do you know if you're letting your female ego take the lead? Ask yourself: "Am I doing this because I want to do the right thing, or because I'm afraid to be seen as selfish, bitchy, rude ..."

2. Stop Multitasking

It's not a productivity tool. It's an excuse for perpetual distraction. It's a life beside the point.

Instead, plan your time well enough to focus on one task – or person – at a time.

Being present is the best thing for business, for home and for our self. Being present is the new "wow" factor, precisely because it is in such short supply.

The fact is, despite the mass consumer delusion otherwise, the only thing we really have to give to each other (and ourselves) is our attention. Our full, deep attention. That's true love.

3. Just Say "No!"

Every time you begrudgingly reply "yes" to someone else's priorities, you say "no" to your own. It's as simple as that. That dream you have, or the sense of purpose you feel – it will never help change the world if you keep avoiding the "no" word.

It's a challenge, I know. Even Oprah has said that the ability to say "no" and not feel guilty about it is her greatest success.

But negotiation specialist William Ury helps make it easier. For a three-step process that really works, check out his book *The Power of a Positive No: How to Say No and Still Get to Yes*.

4. Add Mozart to the Mix

In Pilates class at Ballet Austin last week, in the middle of leg circles, the most magnificent music turned up on the iTunes mix. I floated along atop its sound, using the music to inhabit my body so much more fully and pleurably. My leg circles turned into grand jetés. The music turned out, of course, to be Mozart. Oh, yes, I thought, why don't I add Mozart to my mix?

Mozart's measured, buoyant music is an immediate antidote to any manic moment. You'll find yourself able to breathe, relax and focus.

So be mindful of how music sets the tone – literally and metaphorically – for whatever you are doing. Instead of revving yourself up or zoning yourself out, let Mozart bring you back into yourself.

5. Don't Say "Should"

Just don't use the phrase anymore, ever, whether you're saying it in conversation ("I should go get Nana's present before they run out of the comforter she wants") or in your head ("I should call Sally about when we will meet at the party"). And don't cheat with the word "need." "I need" assumes the same disembodied, Wizard of Oz imperative as "I should."

Instead, take ownership of your own desires. Use the word "want." "I want to get to the store today before it closes." "I want to find out from Sally what time to meet at the party."

Words are powerful. They will help you harness the power of your life, once you take responsibility for owning those words, the intentions behind them, and the choices they imply. ★