

DANGER: Resolutions ahead

BY MONICA SCALF

The New Year is an open invitation to renew. And I'm not just speaking of the library books that have been sitting by the door racking up fines for the last three weeks. I consider my perpetual library lateness to be one more opportunity for charitable giving. Over the years, I think I've paid enough late fees to finance a wing for the latest jewel in our town crown.

The New Year is a chance to see everything with new eyes. It's time to wipe the slate clean, to forget about the disappointments of the last year, and to set our sights on achievements to come. I'm going to start with trying to cut back my visits to Servatii's to just once a day. I need to be saving dough, not consuming it at an alarming rate. There should be a flashing red DANGER sign upon entering.

The good thing is that in 2009, I developed a few new habits that are worth keeping around. I recently ran 26.2 miles. (Ok, you can close that dropped jaw now.) I may be stretching the truth since it took me 7 weeks running 2 miles twice a week on the treadmill in our basement.

Even so, it's a huge accomplishment figuring that on the first workout day back in June I barely completed one minute before having hallucinations accompanied by breathing patterns akin to childbirth. My husband sent one of the kids down to see if I needed to be rescued. Too bad he didn't send them with an oxygen tank. I could have used a few hits.

I may be paying more attention to exercise, however, there are still a whole host of things that I'm neglecting. Most of them have to do with the house. My husband and I have an unwritten rule that unless something is smoking, smelling, or soaking it can wait until tomorrow. Our kids handle things the same way. After our initial panic about the brokenness of said item, we're content to let it sit unfixed for weeks.

My son likes to remind us as much as possible about the time he injured his wrist at football practice and we waited two whole days before taking him to the doctor and finding out that it was fractured. (I have a feeling my grandchildren will know this story before I even get a chance to defend myself. I swear he was acting fine and using it like normal.) Now, it's just another entry in the Mommy Guilt log. I figure I can use this winter to update the latest entries for the year.

However, I'll probably be too busy sorting through the mish-

mash of unmatched gloves and boots for that first unexpected snow day. I might have to try letting the kids just wear their tennis shoes and make them wear baggies over their socks - a method my Mom utilized 30 years ago. It takes weeks for the ankles to thaw out, but think of all the money we'll save on snow boots.

Because more than anything, 2009 made us, and everyone else out there, experts in cutting back and doing more with less. In my family, we entertained ourselves with television and skipped the movie theatre. Which was great, except for the fact that we can tell you the name, occupation, and fatal flaw of every reality star. We unconsciously got addicted to junk food TV. The stuff seems so good while you're consuming it, but afterwards you feel bloated for days.

We also got into the habit of selling off unused items on ebay and Craigslist. Being an Internet garage sale novice does have its drawbacks though. My satisfaction turned to utter surprise when I realized the Spongebob toys we sold were going to South Africa instead of someplace more mundane like South Carolina. I think we lost a dollar or two on that transaction and more than a few precious minutes filling out forms at the post office. But to know that Spongebob and Patrick are living it up on the other side of the world is a reward all of its own.

But the most rewarding thing about the New Year is that it is, in fact, new. We don't have to recycle it or settle for hand-me-downs. It's brand new and all ours to create in whatever way we wish. What will you do with yours?

As for me, I'm going to start by settling up my delinquent account at the library. And then watch out Blockbuster, here I come. As soon as I find those missing DVDs.



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