

7 Best Year-End Rituals for Leaders

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12/5/2016

As a leader you're probably already neck-deep in end-of-the-year planning, forecasting growth, nailing down budgets, and setting targets. All of which is necessary to set yourself up for a great 2017.

But it's not sufficient.

If you really want to soar in the coming year, end-of-the-year planning isn't just about getting your strategy straight and your financial house in order. You also need to get your head right, and that means tuning up your psychology, renewing your mental resources, and recommitting to your deepest values.

In short, you don't just need to review and reflect on business matters. You also need to review and reflect on your life. And the way to do that is with [rituals](#).

" 'Rituals' sounds a little hippie dippie to me," you might say. "I'm not really the chimes and chanting type." But whether you're [a self-help devotee](#) or consider yourself the hardest-nosed realist out there, here's the truth: [Rituals work](#). Science proves that taking concrete actions to mark a new state of mind really does affect our feelings and behavior, even if that's totally irrational. (Do I really need to convince you that [humans aren't entirely rational creatures](#)?)

So what end-of-year rituals are best for leaders? The internet is littered with suggestions, though the best bet might just be whatever feels most natural and effective for you. Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking.

1. Give thanks, in writing.

[Gratitude](#) is one of the best studied and most powerful happiness boosters out there. Counting your blessing strengthens your positivity muscles, putting you on a more optimistic footing for the year ahead. My Inc.com colleague [John Boitnott has suggested](#) one powerful way leaders (or anyone really) could put that insight to use this time of year: Take some time to send your customers or team hand-written thank-you notes.

2. Declutter your space, and your brain.

Changing your physical environment can have a surprisingly profound effect on your mentality, so one way to convince your brain it's time to turn a new page and leave the burdens of the past behind is to physically chuck some stuff. You could opt for [this comprehensive holiday clean-out plan](#) or simply designate an area of your home, office, or life to ruthlessly declutter.

3. Counteract any lingering suckage.

For many folks, 2016 was a pretty rough year. If you're among those struggling to [regain your mental balance](#) after taking a beating in the past 12 months, entrepreneur and financial coach [Denise Duffield-Thomas suggests this straightforward ritual](#) to combat the suckage and reclaims your positivity.

Grab a partner, she instructs, and then sit down with a piece of paper and start completing this sentence: "This year, I'm proud of ... " If you run out of steam, your partner can gently prod you with "What else?" Keep going until you have thought of 30 to 50 brags, big or small, business or personal.

Suddenly, 2016 won't seem so uniformly awful after all, and you'll be reminded that even in bad times, you

managed to salvage some good. Now imagine what you can do in 2017.

4. Remind yourself how much you've learned.

Just like you probably accomplished more this year than you remember, you also probably learned more than you realize. But the key to getting the most out of that new knowledge is actually putting it to use. This ritual from coach Christi Heisted can help.

"Cull your notes from the conferences, classes, and webinars you've attended throughout the year, as well as the books you've read. Summarize your key learnings and set your top 3-5 action steps. Knowledge is great, but knowledge plus implementation makes you unstoppable," [she writes](#).

5. Make peace with your failures (and your enemies).

While counting your blessings in various ways is a powerful way to end the year, it also helps to put to bed any conflicts and regrets you've racked up too. [Thought Catalog offers several good suggestions](#) on how to do this.

For instance, try forgiving an enemy. "Forgiveness doesn't mean welcoming someone back into your life. It doesn't even necessarily mean contacting them again. It just means making the conscious decision to let go of any anger, resentment and blame that you've been holding onto. It means accepting that we're all fallible people, and allowing ourselves to head into the new year with peace in relation to that fact," explains the blog. Science suggests this will [do wonders for your own mental health](#).

Another idea from Thought Catalog is to face your own failures from the previous year head on. "It's tough to make it through the year without a single failure. But rather than dragging that beaten horse into the New Year alongside you, have the strength and the audacity before this year ends to let it go. To accept that you have failed. To let disappointment sink in, but also to revel in the freedom it allows you," the post suggests.

6. Learn to expect the unexpected.

It's easy after something happens to feel that it was inevitable, but it's only hindsight that's 20/20. Remind yourself of that fact and make space in your life for surprises with one more cool ritual from Thought Catalog. "Make a concrete list of all the places life has taken you in the past year that you didn't expect -- and let it serve as a reminder that the coming year will likely be full of surprises, too," the site advises.

7. Light a (literal) fire.

In many parts of the country, a New Year's fire is a good idea simply to keep away the cold, but you could also use that cozy fireplace for ritualistic purposes. Why not write down your fears and burn them to cinders before the clock strikes midnight?

You can even make it a family affair (with proper safety supervision), [suggests Mindbodygreen](#). "You can buy [fly wish paper](#). Have your kids write down on one piece of paper what they want to let go of, and on another piece of paper what they want to manifest (for themselves, for others, and for the planet). Burn the paper and watch it fly into the universe," notes the post. A fireplace works perfectly well too, it adds.