

Editor's notes:

January 2010, Volume 24-5

For last year's words belong to last year's language. And next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning. -- T.S. Eliot

Why is January 1 the start of the New Year?

Can you blame Julius Caesar for your New Year's Day hangover? Probably not, but the idea of beginning the New Year on January 1 did originate with the first Roman Emperor. Caesar designated that day as the New Year in 153 B.C. because that's when Rome's two ruling consuls were chosen.

The so-called Julian calendar remained in standard use throughout the Middle Ages, although many European countries chose to start their calendar year on different days to commemorate various Christian holidays, such as Christmas or Easter.

By the 16th century it was clear that the Julian calendar needed to be reformed. Pope Gregory XIII chose a calendar devised by Italian astronomer and philosopher Aloysius Lilius in 1582. By that time most western European countries had already adopted January 1 as the start of the New Year, but the Gregorian calendar itself was accepted at different times by different nations. Russia didn't abandon the Julian calendar for the Gregorian until after the October Revolution in 1917.

While you are recovering from your New Year's festivities, here are a few more dates to consider this month:

New Year's Dishonor List, January 1 -- On this first day of the first month of the year, the Unicorn Hunters of Lake Superior, Michigan, ask you to pledge to banish hackneyed expressions from the Queen's English. Every January, the List of Words is produced that should be banished for "Mis-use, Over-use, and General Uselessness." The banished words from 2009 included 'maverick,' 'staycation,' and 'carbon footprint.'

Epiphany, January 6 -- The Twelfth Night usually marks the last day of the Christmas season. Eastern Christianity also celebrates Christmas Eve on this day.

Winnie-the-Pooh Day, January 18. Commemorating the birth of A. A. Milne (in 1882), creator of Pooh Bear, Piglet, Eeyore, and the other denizens of the Hundred Acre Wood.

National Hugging Day, January 21 -- Celebrate National Hugging Day this month by wrapping your arms around your spouse or a friend. Not only does it feel good, but research shows that hugging has actual health benefits. According to Tiffany Field of the Touch Research Institute at the University

of Miami School of Medicine, touch -- such as hugging -- lowers the output of a stress hormone called cortisol. Other research has shown that hugging boosts the amount of haemoglobin in the blood, increasing the supply of oxygen to the body, which helps prevent diseases and speeds recovery from illness.

Compliment Day, January 24. "Every day is a good day for a compliment." But if there's only one day during which you remember to compliment someone, make it today. Set a goal to compliment at least five people. For suggested activities and ideas, go to www.complimentday.com.

Three simple words for a better life

Improving your life begins with your attitude. You don't need subliminal tapes or hypnosis. Just try using some of these three-word phrases more often:

- *I thank you.*
- *Please forgive me.*
- *I trust you.*
- *Let me help.*
- *I believe you.*
- *I forgive you.*
- *Maybe you're right.*
- *Count on me.*
- *I understand you.*
- *Go for it.*

Let's resolve to make some resolutions:

Time for some New Year's resolutions? Here are some suggestions, some silly, some with merit:

- Stop sitting in the living room all day in pyjamas. Instead, let's move our computers into the bedroom.
- Figure out why we really need 12 e-mail addresses.
- Think of a computer password other than "password."
- Stop sending e-mail, text messages, and instant messages to people while we're already on the phone with them.
- Spend more time with neglected children -- our own.

Pay attention to the clues of deception

The TV series Lie To Me features a psychologist who can recognize lying by observing the slightest change of expression or a subtle unconscious gesture. Most of us aren't that skilled, but you can learn to spot a lie by paying close attention. Here's what to watch and listen for:

- Words and gestures that don't match. Look at the timing of people's words and gestures (or expressions). Example: Joe says, "I'd love to help you with that," but frowns, or else flashes a smile a moment or so afterward. Chances are he's really less than thrilled. Sincere, spontaneous gestures and expressions are simultaneous with statements.
- Repetition. Liars are more likely to repeat your question or rephrase it when answering. You: "Did you take the last piece of cake?" Liar: "No, I didn't take the last piece of cake."
- A thoughtful pause. Most people need time to think before they tell a lie. "I had to . . . take my mother to the dentist," for example. Be sensitive to hesitations and pauses when they answer your questions.
- Try changing the subject. When you suspect someone is lying, switch to a different topic. Liars will be relieved that you've moved on, and eager to engage the new topic. People telling the truth are more likely to be confused by the abrupt switch.
- Don't jump to conclusions. All of these behaviours may have alternative explanations. If the matter is serious, investigate the facts before making any accusations.

Resolve to Learn New Skills

According to a survey by Accountemps, a staffing company, the number one career-related resolution is to learn new skills. If you can't afford to go to formal classes or add another degree, think about picking up extra skills on the job by filling in for others on vacation, or through volunteer work that challenges you, or from a professional mentor.

The Importance of Small Talk

The Stanford University School of Business tracked a group of its MBAs 10 years after they graduated to determine what accounted for their success. Apparently, their grade point averages were not a factor, but their ability to talk to others was.

Communications experts say that when visiting a new client, engage in small talk with the receptionist, as well as the business owner or manager. If you'll be visiting this company in the future, make notes of the conversation so you can follow up with questions like, "Did you enjoy the vacation you were planning?"

Quotable Quotes

In the New Year, may your right hand always be stretched out in friendship and never in want.

-- *Irish toast*

Treat your friends as you do your pictures and place them in their best light.

-- *Jennie Churchill*

Happiness is a thing to be practised, like the violin.

-- *John Lubbock*

Does your career make you happy?

Business owners are happiest in their careers, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.

Six categories of questions about the quality of their life and work were asked of survey participants. Business owners scored 72.5 in overall well-being, the highest rating.

Other careers with the happiest scores include:

Professional: 71.5

Manager/executive: 70.9

Farming/forestry: 67.8

Sales: 67.6

Clerical: 66.1

I was born in Germany, in 1945, just after the end of World War II. My family up-rooted in 1949 and came to Canada. We became Canadian citizens in 1957. My parents, although they carried on certain traditions of their childhood and spoke German at home, always considered themselves Canadians. They were grateful that they were allowed the chance to begin a new life in Canada.

I am proud of my German roots but I too have never considered myself anything but Canadian. Canada has been good to me. I have been allowed to prosper and to live my life on my terms. I have the freedom to speak my mind, to associate with whom I wish, and to dream and to act on my dreams.

I am lucky. So are we all. Thank you Canada, and thank you to all of you, friends and customers of Helix Courier Limited.

I wish all of you a healthy and prosperous 2010.

Happy New Year!

Sieg Pedde, President, Helix Courier Limited