By now you might be well into your New Years Resolution, or you may have already abandoned it. For many of us a New Years Resolution isn’t the best way to make lasting change. We usually pick something we aren't really committed to and then don’t feel too guilty when we drop it. We may start off strong but then lose our momentum.

When I was in my yoga therapy training, we learned about a variety of ways to make our bodies, minds and spiritual selves stronger. We didn’t just learn it, we experienced it. We tried on ayurveda, the ancient lifestyle practice that provides good health and well-being, we participated in our colleagues’ yoga therapy classes and sessions so we could feel the life change that results from the practice we are doing with our clients and were encouraged to make our own changes in our life. This was essential to learning and to understand what we are providing and how it can change a life. Your life and mine.

At times I had a hard time with these actions. It’s hard to start a new habit. It takes 66 days or between 2 and 8 months to form a new habit and for some it could be more. What is important is that it is something you can do, something for which you see a benefit in your life. This will encourage you to keep up with it and follow through. I tried making a daily yoga practice, getting up early enough to exercise or do a full yoga practice, going to bed early, not watching TV. In the end, my kids waking in the night, being tired in the evening, wanting to catch up on my favorite show, all can get in the way of my resolve to make change. To make changes we also have to investigate how it will benefit us to make the change. This involves a certain level of acceptance.

June Squib, a 95 yo actress was on TV being interviewed and was asked about aging and taking on new roles in her 90s. She was asked what she would say to others who are older and are feeling like life as they know it is over. She had some advice I thought was relevant to yoga. She said it is important to accept what is happening but to not give up.

Acceptance is necessary but giving up is not. This is the ultimate acceptance. We aren’t talking about giving up. We are talking about seeing things as they are and not living in a state of denial but instead living in a state of reality. If we don’t start here, we can’t go anywhere and won’t be motivated to make changes that can keep us going on the path we want.

In the end the one thing I was able to incorporate was making my bed. Now every morning I wake up and one of the first things I do is make my bed, no matter what. This seems like something small, but it is proof that I can change, and you can too. It also helps with other goals like getting to bed on time. If I know my bed is ready for me, I can look forward to climbing into bed before it’s too late.

I would recommend making small changes after you select the one thing you want to work on this year.

* Pick something realistic: instead of setting a goal for working out several hours daily, decide to add 20-30 minutes into your exercise routine, or adding one fruit or vegetable into each meal, drinking one more glass of water each day, etc.
* Set a specific goal: Don’t be too vague or nothing will happen. Eating better is a great goal but what does that mean? Make a plan for how you will eat better. Will you add more protein into your diet, eat less sugar, get rid of junk food, processed foods, etc.
* Be accountable: Tell someone who cares about you or who will keep you honest that you are making these changes. This person can check in and make sure you are following through.
* Start right now and allow for mistakes: Don’t be so hard on yourself if you don’t succeed right away, change takes time (2-8 months or more) There may be days where it doesn’t work out or where you fail but that’s ok, just start again the next day.

My resolution for the New Year? I don’t make resolutions, but I am always striving to make improvements. I would say I plan to be more involved this year. I want to get out there and do things that help me to engage with my community. This may be the hardest part of being a business owner for me, Being Seen. Yes, it’s hard to live outside of your comfort zone but if there is one thing I have learned from my 7 years of Yoga Therapy experiences is that sometimes you have to feel uncomfortable to make progress. This is life. It’s hard and uncomfortable but it is important to be engaged, whatever that looks like. Maybe it’s attending a People’s March to be heard politically, taking a yoga class for survivors of Intimate Partner Violence, attending a sound healing session with Bella Soul, going to a Retreat to Recharge, or just connecting to yourself with yoga or yoga therapy.

Whatever you do, I hope you are successful and prosperous in your New Year.