

# New Year, New Perspective

By SARA J. O'BRIEN

**A**ccording to historical records, it is believed that the concept of a New Year's resolution dates back some 4,000 years ago to the ancient Babylonians. Although the year began in mid-March, rather than in January, they are said to have made promises to the king and the gods to pay their debts or return borrowed goods—serving as an antecedent to the modern New Year's resolution as we know it. First celebrated in 46 B.C. after Julius Caesar adjusted the calendar to institute January 1 as the start of the new year, this date marks the tradition of reviewing our accomplishments and downfalls, resolving to make changes in the future.<sup>1</sup> A holiday celebrated across the globe, it is welcomed through countless traditions fostered from different cultures, heritages, and religions.

In anticipation of it all, we often reflect upon our personal and professional lives. Maybe you count the blessings that have been bestowed upon you, or perhaps you ponder the things that you wish had turned out different. As people (especially us lawyers) share these observations, we often see them denoted as a “year in review.” However, you frame it, it creates an environment for New Year's resolutions to form. We are energized by the ticking clock, certain that upon the stroke of midnight we will be set in our new ways, committed to do more and be better in the new year. And so, as the countdowns are shouted, the fireworks go up, the church bells ring out, and people around the world yell out, “Happy New Year!”—we pop the champagne and toast to our new selves and new perspective on life.

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This ambitious energy may carry some of us for months (or weeks) before we throw in the towel or resort back to old routines. (A survey completed by Forbes Health found that the average New Year's resolution lasts 3.74 months.)<sup>2</sup> The truth is, developing a new habit or way of life takes time, and is not something that happens overnight. In fact, forming a new habit can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days, and it takes an average of 66 days for a new behavior to become automatic.<sup>3</sup> In a world of instant gratification, this can be a daunting concept. As lawyers, between meeting billable hour quotas, advancing our careers, maintaining healthy behaviors, and managing a healthy work life balance, we don't always feel we have time in our days to commit to developing new habits. Perhaps this is a systemic problem, one in which we need to initiate change within the profession itself. Or perhaps, it is simply a disconnect between our lived realities and how we measure our own success and well-being.

As young(er) lawyers, we are acutely aware of the fact that our profession and personal lives are in constant contest with one another, that we are pulled in multiple directions, and that every decision we make inevitably creates a ripple effect, adding more and more to our to-do lists. In our own minds, we may feel overwhelmed, but others are left wondering how we accomplish so much and still find time to sleep. It comes down to perspective. In a way, it is similar to the two perspectives in a pending litigation matter. The facts may not be in dispute, but a plaintiff perceives they were wronged, while a defendant perceives they did everything right. How a client views their case must be reconciled with the boundaries of the law and the perception of the opposing party, and in some cases a jury of six unknown persons. In deciding how you will view the realities of your day-to-day life and how you will choose to measure your own success and well-being, give yourself credit where it is due, and consider all perspectives on the facts.



any to commit to putting your best foot forward, to do more, or to be better. The anticipation of the clock striking midnight happens every day. This year, I encourage you to embrace the tomorrow that comes every night at 12:00 a.m. Don't wait for tradition, or for the world to join you. Reconcile the successes and failures of each day, and march on the opportunities of tomorrow. Be the lawyer you went to law school to become, and the attorney your clients need. ■

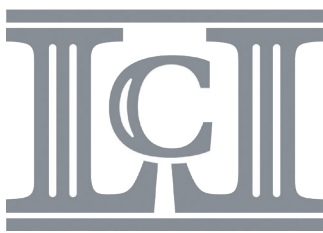
**NOTES**

- 1 [www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions](http://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions)
- 2 [www.forbes.com/health/mind/new-years-resolutions-statistics](http://www.forbes.com/health/mind/new-years-resolutions-statistics)
- 3 [www.healthline.com/health/how-long-does-it-take-to-form-a-habit#takeaway](http://www.healthline.com/health/how-long-does-it-take-to-form-a-habit#takeaway)

Undoubtedly, we all made at least one resolution at the start of this year, and some of us may be made a few. While some of us may still be going strong, upholding and sticking to our new habits, others may have “missed” a

day or two, and are thinking maybe we will do better next year. (Don't worry, you are not alone.) Despite tradition, there is no black letter law limiting resolutions to be made on January 1. Tomorrow is as good a time as

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