



FIND RESOLUTIONS THAT LIGHT YOU UP, NOT WEAR YOU DOWN

A 10-Minute Exercise

By Katy Romita, Director of One Small Stone

New Year's Resolutions often feel like a whole lot of "shoulds" — like we need to tighten up, buckle down, and push harder. If your resolutions feel more like taking bitter medicine than steps to breathing easier, try this 10-minute exercise to set intentions that spark genuine joy rather than more stress.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Four pieces of paper (Scrap paper, a journal - anything works!)
- A pen or pencil
- A timer (the one on your phone works great!)
- A reasonably quiet and comfortable place to sit

STEP 1: Settle In (30 seconds)

Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and take 10 slow breaths.

STEP 2: List Your "Shoulds" (2 minutes)

On your first sheet of paper, write "I should..." at the top. Without editing or judging, list every "should" that comes to mind — big or small. For example, "I should eat healthier. I should be more organized. I should..." Just let it flow until the timer goes off.

STEP 3: Doodle Your "Shoulds" (1 minute)

Set your timer again and, using a second sheet, doodle as you think about your list of "shoulds." Scribbles, shapes, stick figures — anything goes. No need to make it nice. Again, just let it flow.

STEP 4: Shake It Out (10–15 seconds)

Take a couple of deep breaths. Roll your shoulders or stretch any way that feels good.

Step 5: List Your "Wants" (2 minutes)

Set your timer. On your third sheet of paper, write "I want..." Again, write freely without stopping to correct yourself. For example, "I want belly laughs. I want time for my hobby. I want..." Write without editing or judging yourself. This exercise is just for you. No one else needs to see this list — and you don't need to do anything with this list if you don't want to. So, let a stream of consciousness flow without filtering or second-guessing yourself. Keep writing until your timer goes off.

Step 6: Doodle Your "Wants" (1 minute)

Take your last sheet of paper and doodle while thinking about your list of "wants." Let your hand move without trying to control what appears. Again, make any marks, shapes, or drawings that you want.

STEP 7: Reflect (1 to 2 minutes)

Take 10 breaths. Look at both doodles. Then ask yourself:

- What feelings or emotions show up in each drawing?
- How does my body feel as I look at the doodles? Do any emotions show up as physical sensations?
- Does one drawing (and list) feel more comfortable, grounded, or authentic to me?
- Are there "wants" I am ready to embrace and move toward?
- Are there "shoulds" I can gently lay down?

STEP 8: Integrate (1 minute)

Create a final short list of what you want — not what you think you're *supposed* to want, and not what you think you "should" want — what you really want.

Here's to YOU this New Year!

"Shoulds" are strong. We've spent our whole lives hearing them! But, this New Year, let's resolve to show up more authentically. When we step into who we really are, we invite more joy and genuine wisdom into our lives — and that benefits everyone around us. It all ripples out. So here's to the year we stop "shoulding" and start shining.

A note about this practice:

Connecting our head, heart, and hands through doodling (or, as it's more formally referred to, through "therapeutic art") helps us remove filters and access truths. The practice described above is not therapy and is not a substitute for professional guidance, but it can be a tool for better connecting with yourself. If you try it, I'd love to hear how it goes! Thank you to Mor Keshet, an EcoArt Therapist, for inspiring this New Year's intention-setting practice.

About the author:

Katy Romita helps people to stop "shoulding" all over themselves and start reconnecting with their own innate wisdom and beauty. Known for her warm, down-to-earth style, Katy makes calm and clarity accessible, even in the chaos, through meditation, therapeutic art, sound healing, yoga nidra, and reiki.

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