



# A NEW YEAR'S READER

to read quietly or aloud, alone or with others, upon a new year

# shout out to the contributors



## **contributors to this second edition of the New Year's Reader include:**

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## **Susannah K. Malarkey**

Dominican Sister of the Catholic Church for 65 years

### **editor's disclaimer:**

When we asked one of the contributors, Susannah K. Malarkey, what title we could use for her, she sent a wise response:

"You could say (I guess) a Dominican Sister of the Catholic Church for 65 years; but my preference is to not put people into small categories, since our human lives are so much more, so much larger than any group to which we may belong."

While we ultimately decided to include a brief description of each contributor's professional endeavors, we ask readers to be mindful of Susannah's reminder that nobody is solely defined by their association with one group or another. We are each so much more.

**the new year's reader was:**

**inspired by**

Seth Godin's Thanksgiving Reader

**conceived and edited by**

Peter Koehler and Keeley Tillotson,

**a suggestion:**

If you're having a New Year's Eve dinner or gathering, we recommend that you print this out, and put a reading on each person's seat, and then read them aloud throughout your meal or night together.

**The New Year's Reader  
can be found  
and shared at  
[newyearsreader.com](http://newyearsreader.com)**

# What Do You Want?

Write down your goals so that when you accomplish them you'll remember you were brave enough to want them.

This comes from my belief that the bravest thing we can do is admit we want something.

## Alexi Pappas

### **suggested practice:**

Take time to write down 2 or more SMART\* goals for the year ahead. If you're with others, share what you wrote.

\*specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, time-bound

## **a clear mind**

This was told to me on my recent travels by a man who shared his campsite with me because the campground was full. He didn't accept any money from me, he and his wife just offered me cold beer and a warm fire ... and this quote, from a BART train banner in the early 70s.

"With realization of indivisible space, the mind, free from desire, becomes tranquil and clear."

BART, circa 1972

**as told by Jacob Friedman**

# first drafts

Here's a thing I believe:  
The first draft always sucks.  
Things want to be bad.  
Making them good requires  
sustained effort  
and good editing.

**Alex Blumberg**

## **follow up question:**

What project, personal or professional,  
do you want to do a first draft of this year?

What is stopping you for starting tomorrow?

# Compromising Oneself

"You are growing into consciousness, and my wish for you is that you feel no need to constrict yourself to make other people comfortable."

-Ta-Nehisi Coates

**Follow up question:**

How often do you compromise yourself for the acceptance of others?

*Quote and question contributed by*

**Cassius Pettit**

# Accepting Oneself

The New Year is a great time to set goals. It is also a great time to remind ourselves how amazing we already are, with nothing changed, in this moment. (Conveniently, science also backs up the notion that we are better able to reach goals if we aren't negative and self-critical but confident in ourselves).

In that vein, I'd like to share an excerpt I read recently from *Finding Your Strength in Difficult Times* by David Viscott:

## **Being Happy**

Being happy is liking the way you feel and being open to the future without fear.

Being happy is accepting yourself at this place and time.

Being happy is not being perfect, becoming rich, falling in love, having power, knowing the right people, or succeeding in your job.

Being happy is liking yourself the way you are right now -- maybe not all of yourself, but the essential you.

You deserve to love yourself for the way you are at this moment.

If you think you have to be more than you are now to be happy and love yourself, you are imposing impossible conditions on yourself.

Only you know yourself the way you do. You can compile the longest and least sympathetic inventory of your faults. At any time, no matter how successful or accomplished you become, you will be able to undermine your happiness by reciting this list of faults.

Know your faults but don't allow their existence to become an excuse for not loving yourself just the way you are.

**A challenge - repeat the following mantra every time you feel under pressure to perform, compete or compare yourself to others:**

"Knowing that my best can only come from me, I accept myself just as I am."

**Keeley Tillotson**

# Finding Wisdom in Opposition

We tend to focus at New Year's on celebration and resolutions for the future ahead. I wonder if we could make room for something more searching this year too. This is a moment of unsettled uncertainty in our families and communities and nation. We sense that somehow what comes next is up to us, but we're not sure where to begin. Yet it's precisely when we let our truest, hardest questions rise up in our midst, allow their place among us, that we become able to live into them rather than away, and to do so together. Wisdom emerges precisely when we have to hold seemingly opposing realities in a creative tension and interplay: power and frailty, birth and death, pain and hope, beauty and brokenness, mystery and conviction, calm and buoyancy, mine and yours.

## Krista Tippett

Note from the contributor: "This is adapted from my book *Becoming Wise* - a section that means a lot to me."

### follow up exercise:

"Yet it's precisely when we let our truest, hardest questions rise up in our midst, allow their place among us, that we become able to live into them"

Write this down in a notebook, and say it out loud to yourself. Now write about it. Free associate. Write down the uncomfortable thoughts that enter your mind. Recognize the hard questions that you find your mind trying to pivot away from and write those down too. If you feel contradiction, that's OK. Keep going. Re-read when it you're done. Consider sharing your reflection with at least one other person.

# The Eyes of The Universe

Our knowledge of the universe is not something separate from the universe; it is a part of the universe. Thus, for humans to know the universe is for the universe to know itself. As Carl Sagan put it, 'humans are the stuff of the cosmos examining itself'. We are literally made of the same elements of Stars. But maybe more than that. When one contemplates the universe, part of the universe becomes conscious of itself.

Discuss: Could it be that humans (intentionally or not) are the tool the Universe uses to become conscious of itself? After all, for billions and billions of years the universe has been around but there was no life form around to realize it existed until the universe solved that problem and evolved us into it.

**Benjamin Davis**

## **Engaging with Life**

We are a by-product of our questions. Perhaps we stop asking ourselves about how we can be better/best at something this year and, instead, ask ourselves - "How can I be engaged every day? How can I make sure I am being conscious about my decisions?"

All this would take is a commitment to spend 3 minutes to ask yourselves these questions at the start of your day, every day. And, a calendar reminder to re-commit to this habit every weekend.

Wishing you more engaged, more conscious days this new year. As we live our days, so we live our lives.

**Rohan Rajiv**

# Radical Ownership

It's all your fault.

Remember that this year.

If your relationship with a colleague, family member, or boss is strained, it's your fault.

When someone on your team drops the ball, it's your fault.

That time someone yells at you? Yep, your fault.

It's not about blame. It's about empowerment. Empowering yourself to take radical ownership over your life.

Take the necessary steps to mend fences with your boss, or your parent. Don't wait for them.

When a colleague misses the mark, own the fact that you could have been more clear in communicating expectations and better at offering support. Then help them succeed next time.

When someone is angry with you, remove yourself, and watch the situation through their eyes and you'll see how powerful it would be if you respond "I'm sorry, this is my fault."

When it's all your fault, the world opens up and becomes one of possibility. You no longer have to wait for others to take ownership, because you already have.

**Peter Koehler**

# A New Year's Practice

**New Year's resolutions are a trap, a fraudulent way to let yourself off the hook.**

**The alternative is the New Year's practice.**

**Seven minutes a day, never more, but it can be less ... a commitment to do just one thing, but to do it every single day.**

**An interaction with another human. Something that frightens you. Something that adds dignity and possibility and kindness to the world.**

**Something that you can't rationalize your way out of, something you would miss if you stopped.**

**Can you imagine that? Can you do it?**

**Seth Godin**

**I welcome each day as it comes,  
not seeking answers to anything,  
only opening myself to possibility.**

A quote from Alice Malarkey Koehler's Memoir  
*Into the Wind*, contributed by her sister  
**Susannah K. Malarkey**



**NOTES** (feel free to use this space to write down any notes you have)

**thank you for reading and sharing.**

**here's to an unusually auspicious year ahead.**

*with gratitude from the editors -*

*Peter Koehler + Keeley Tillotson*

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