

Annual Review: Make every year a great year by Cynthia Morris

It's so valuable to do a reflection process to see how the year has gone. Every year I spend time checking in with how things are going so I can make adjustments for more satisfaction the following year. I often design a luscious and vast magazine-style annual report. ([Get the 2016 version here if you haven't already.](#)) Because of travel, my review process this year will be much more simplified.

Here, I offer three ways to do your own annual review. Enjoy this process and let it reflect what you value and how your life expresses those values.

Before you begin, clarify what's important about reviewing your year. What do you hope to gain from this process? Free-write for 10 minutes using this prompt:

For me, the annual review....

Then, read over these three options and choose which one is appropriate for you now. There's no need to do an exhaustive process. Just choose one that feels right and adapt it to your own needs.

The 15-minute version

The Wheel of Life is a trusted coaching tool to help you **see a quick snapshot of your life**. At a glance, you can see where things are less desirable place than you want. This will allow you to see where you can make changes.

Make a circle on a page and divide it like a pie into eight pieces. You can label different categories of your life as you'd like, but here are some suggested categories.

1. Health and fitness
2. Money
3. Career
4. Spirituality
5. Creativity and fun
6. Friends and family
7. Significant other
8. Environment

For each section on the wheel, assign a number. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being not satisfied and 10 being totally satisfied, mark your current level of satisfaction. Make a line for each section.

What do you notice? You can quickly see where things shine this year and where things need a bit of polish. For the higher numbers, jot some notes about what makes that satisfaction level so high. Do the same for the lower numbers. If you wish to be proactive, you can use this to make a plan for 2018. Reflect on the specific actions you will take next year to bring those numbers up.

Choose one or two sections with low numbers and focus your efforts there. This simple process is a great way to make the annual review flow into a plan for the following year.

The one-hour version

Flip through the past with your calendar or photos to initiate your annual review.

Take out your 2017 calendar and your notebook - analogue or digital - whatever works for you. You can also do this visually by looking through your Instagram feed or your Facebook feed.

Begin in January and go through each month, **savoring the WINS**. Look for work wins, creative wins and personal wins like anniversaries or fitness wins.

Jot notes for each month, noting the things that surprised you. How did the things you planned go? What surprises rocked your world?

If you take a lot of photos, you can also go through your photo year to see what you focused your lens on. What stories do your photos tell about your life? What images do you want to see in next year's photo album? Those are the images you look at and say, thank you, more of that, please!

At the end of the year, **give your year a title**. This was the year of.... Use insights you gleaned from this to plan a fantastic 2018.

The three-hour version

Feel free to make this a special mini-retreat. You may wish to light a candle, put on some soothing music, brew some special tea. Do whatever will help you savor this reflection process. Or simply answer the questions in bursts between errands.

Looking back over the year, what did you accomplish?

List at least 25 things, among them:

- things you have done right
- ways that you have grown as a person
- creative projects you have worked on
- creative projects you have finished
- goals achieved (both personal, professional and creative)
- positive life changes
- special memories you have created
- relationships you have cultivated
- anything else that is meaningful for you.

Use the following coaching inquiries to deepen your reflection process. Use free-writing to gain the most clarity.

- What ritual can you use to celebrate 2017?
- What were your disappointments?
- What can you learn from the disappointments?
- What surprises, opportunities or juju came your way?
- What thoughts, beliefs or habits can you release to move forward?
- What/whom do you need to forgive?
- How will you savor your efforts and successes from 2017? Don't skip this vital piece!
- What is your vision for yourself and your work for 2018?
- What is one thing you can do now to prepare for that vision?

Sharing your process

I like to publish my annual review as a magazine to savor and inspire readers. Sharing my annual review has always been part of my business. As a coach for creatives, I've always wanted to 'walk my talk' and show things I have done as a way to encourage others. But not everyone wants to do that. What feels right for you? Why and when might you share your annual review?

You could share yours:

- to show your process and your progress
- to be accountable for things you commit to for the following year

Here are some ways to share. Sharing helps us to reflect more deeply and to connect to others.

You might share your annual review with:

- your partner, business or life
- your family
- a circle of close friends or colleagues, where you each share your reflections on your year
- your online community - on your blog or in your newsletter, or as a download

It's not always easy to be public about our process. My challenge is to not just share the highlights, but the lowlights as well. I sometimes forget that we learn even more from our 'failures' than from our successes. It's important to include the missteps, disappointments and challenges as well.

Let us know what you plan to do for your annual review! **[Leave a comment on the Original Impulse blog.](#)**