

## Shrink Rap: Can You Move Forward Into the New Year?

As another year closes, and a new one begins, we have much to be thankful for. If we will just look for it. Unfortunately, things that have happened this past year have left many feeling unsure, nervous, apprehensive, and dreading this New Year.

The year of 2016 saw much division in our culture. Communities rose up against corruption in the legal system with over generalization, judgementalism, and irrational conclusions that *all* people within a group are *all* alike. Cloning of humanity is such a fallacy; it is irrational to think that everyone who wears a certain uniform all believe the same way.

The ending of a four year term Presidency (that lasted eight years with a re-election) also saw a polarization in our country. There are those who strongly believed in voting with your registered party, regardless of the candidate. There were others who believed in having another historical event in electing our first female president, while there were others who believed it is in the country's best interest to elect a conservative business man who shattered the traditional values of previous presidents in his own personal life. And, of course, there were others who wished we could set another historical event in electing someone outside of the status quo Republican or Democratic Parties.

Religiously we have divisions as well. We are encouraged to be culturally competent, tolerant, accepting, and non-judgmental of other religions, all the while some of those other religions are killing people in the name of their God. They claim revenge for acts most of us can not comprehend.

The only thing we can really control is ourselves. In order to pull back from the divisions, I challenge you to answer some questions individually:

Can I look beyond the division, and count my blessings? Can I look forward to the New Year in hope, peace, and happiness? Can I grow in maturity, open mindedness, and gratitude for all I have in this country? Can I stop to appreciate the things that are closest to me – friends, family, home, community, occupation? Can I be strong in my commitment to act in love, regardless of what others choose to do? Can I make good choices for myself as well as for the good of my fellow man and our precious Earth? Can I act in kindness to others? Can I be giving and humble?

Personally, I will live by Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” For in this scripture I can reflect on the above questions with faith that God will direct my path if I trust in Him, ask for His guidance, and do my best to live his commandments. How about you?

Have a Happy New Year!

Linda Yearout, Licensed Clinical Marriage & Family Therapist, Hope's Place