

Janet's Journal

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December 2021

Here Comes 2022

Dear [FirstName],

This final newsletter of 2021 has plenty for you to peruse, from helpful tips to thoughtful little reads. However, there is one article in particular that I hope you will especially enjoy as I think it sums up December: The Wish Jar. Having a wish jar, a place to openly hope and dream and conceptualize what you would like to do over the next year is vital, optimistic, a great way to wrap up the year, while gently considering what comes next.

The last line of the newsletter draws on an old Inuit saying, loosely referencing a warm home and all you need in life. If your house and home have grown dreary, I hope you will reach out to me if you're thinking of buy or sell, so we can dream up some warm ideas for how to transform your space in time for a fresh, new year.

All the best to you and yours,

Janet Browning

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Hear Every Voice

All of the third graders at Emily's school had practiced songs for the holiday concert. When they first received the music at the start of the school year, December seemed far off in the future.

However, with just a week to go until the concert, Emily still didn't have any idea how she would make the concert a good one for her mother, who was born deaf.

The teacher informed the children that a few permission slips, required to walk to the theater for the afternoon concert, were still missing... including Emily's slip.

After her brothers had recapped their day in the American Sign Language they all used at home, Emily bravely asked her mom if she would like to attend the concert. Her mother, usually shy in social settings, hesitated but smiled and signed the permission slip.

Friday, most of the children spotted their parents in the old theater, but one seat remained empty. At show time, Emily's mom still had not arrived.

As the lights rose over the stage for the show to begin, the audience faded into darkness and the little girl gave up trying to spot her mother, focusing instead on singing with all her heart. Suddenly, a movement caught her eye. To the right of the risers, she saw both her brothers, signing the words for the audience.

When the house lights came on, Emily saw her mother was seated in the center of the first row. Her mother stood, then proudly began clapping in a standing ovation for the young performers, with all the other parents following suit.

The show was perfect.

December Question

Q: When is holiday cookie exchange day?

Nov Question

Q: What country did pumpkins originate?

A: Mexico

The Wish Jar

This December, consider starting a wish jar. Regardless of how far you are into the month, take a decorative jar or a pretty vase and have everyone who passes through write down their wishes, hopes or goals for the year.

Let everyone know their notes can be serious and goal-oriented, or more for fun, such as saying they will learn one new recipe each week over the next year. Keep it easy and rule-free: family and friends can add as many or as few ideas as they would like to include.

Tuck the jar away and one year later, you can retrieve the jar and read the notes to see how far everyone has progressed. You might be surprised at who took the challenge seriously.



Which Box Do You Need?

Experts often encourage people to think outside the box when trying to be creative. According to *The Creativity Post* writer K.H. Kim, you should consider three distinct boxes to unleash your imagination:

- **Inside box:** This box holds your expertise and knowledge, and is useful for narrowing things down, focusing on specifics, and identifying options.
- **Outside box:** This box is flexible and holds all the possibilities. Let it relax your focus and explore everything, whether or not it's related to work.
- **New box:** This box lets you synthesize and refine ideas for effective implementation. Use it to connect ideas and find new ways of approaching problems.

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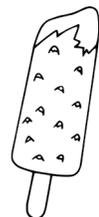
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Young Ideas

Children are naturally creative and inventive because they don't know what's impossible. Try checking out these inventions created by kids across the years:

- **Trampoline.** Sixteen-year-old George Nissen was captivated by the sight of trapeze artists dropping into nets at the finish of their shows in the 1930s. In his parents' garage he developed the "bouncing rig," a metal frame with canvas stretched over it. Years later he switched out the canvas for nylon and came up with a new name— a "trampoline," adding the letter e to the Spanish words for *diving board*.
- **Earmuffs.** At age 15, Chester Greenwood's ears grew painfully cold while ice skating. A scarf around his head didn't help, so he went home, built a wire frame, and asked his grandmother to sew some beaverskin pads to it. Greenwood patented his earmuffs in 1877 and eventually sold them to soldiers fighting in World War I.
- **Popsicle.** One cold night in San Francisco in 1905, 11-year old Frank Epperson mixed up a concoction of soda water powder and water and left it outside all night. In the morning he looked at the frozen mixture with the stirring stick still inside and realized it might be fun to eat. He began giving them out as treats, and as an adult, he patented the product with the name "Eppsicle," later changing it to "Popsicle" after his own children started calling it by that name.



Holiday Spending Is Up

If you're planning your holiday shopping, you may have lots of competition at the mall and online. A *Roku* and *Harris Poll* survey on consumer shopping trends in 2021 found that spending could hit new records this season, as consumers expect to increase their spending for the holiday season.

The survey found that 72% of holiday shoppers feel confident the economy will improve in the next 12 months. Thirty-six percent of consumers expect to spend more this year, the highest number reported since 2018. Holiday spending is expected to reach a record \$937 per person on holiday purchases, a 5% increase from 2020.

In-store shopping may be coming back as well. Forty-three percent of respondents said they plan

to shop in person on Black Friday, an 11% increase from 2020, when concerns about COVID-19 kept many shoppers at home. However, online shopping isn't going away— 57% of consumers plan to do most of their shopping online.

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Pursue A Career You Love

Podcasters Eric Eliasson and Lara Mitra asked 30 top business leaders what they'd learned on their path to success. The *MIT Sloane School of Management* website presents some of their insights:

- **Diversify your passions.** Don't limit yourself to just one area of interest. Look around and seek out new possibilities throughout your career.
- **Be open to changing views of success.** "Success" can mean making lots of money, having power, earning the love of a family, or an infinite number of other things. As you learn and grow, your definition of success may shift and you may find that you have very different ideas of what's valuable at different stages of your life.
- **Remember to plan.** Set some goals early on and develop a plan for moving forward. You may have to adjust your plan as your circumstances and views change, but you'll be in a better position to pivot if you have a firm foundation to stand on.
- **Take action to build confidence.** You may be unsure that you're doing the right thing, but if you do nothing, you'll never achieve any of your goals. Taking action can give you the confidence you need to keep moving forward.

Try This Calming Tip

Sometimes, you need an approach to emotional situations that allows you to take a breather before automatically saying “no” or insisting things go your way. Try these two little things the next time someone approaches you with an impossible-sounding request:

First, take a walk. If you’re feeling burnt out or possibly overwhelmed by emotion while at work, sometimes the most effective measure is the simplest one: take a breather. If you have the ability to leave the premises entirely, a walk sometimes can restore your energy and change your mood. Get out, enjoy some fresh air and see if the situation seems more approachable when you return to your work area.

Then, try giving people what they need, even if it is not how you would approach a situation. Ask yourself what the person is seeking and see if you can some way deliver it for them. For example, if you have a coworker who needs ideas broken down into manageable bites, it could be more effective to deconstruct a larger project than wait for them to proceed outside their comfort zone.

Berry Sweet Tradition

The Bayberry candle has a lovely history that dates back to the earliest settlers. Colonials typically formed their candles from animal tallow, a useful material, but not one with an especially pleasant scent. The tallow candles were smoky, as well.

When some of the early settlers learned they could boil wild bayberries down and use their wax for candles that not only smelled good, but also had a naturally pretty green color, it quickly turned into a coveted item.

Colonial women began to give a pair as a gesture of friendship, and a new tradition emerged: to burn the candles on a chosen night as soon as the first star appeared in the sky. Today, they are often purchased and shared with an accompanying tale and poem about the past and current beliefs of burning the bayberry candles.

One common verse found along with the sweet smelling candles is as follows,

*“This bayberry candle comes from a friend,
so on a holiday burn it to the end.
For a bayberry candle burned to the socket,
will bring joy to the heart, and gold to the pocket.”*

Perhaps you want to share in the tradition and give out Bayberry candles this year!



To Your Health

The December holidays are a time of joy, tradition, and food... *a whole lot of food*, which can make it hard to stick to a healthy diet. However, you don't have to wait until New Year's Day to renew your commitment to nutritional sanity, and you don't have to practice complete denial, either. Follow this advice to maintain some balance:

- **Don't skip meals.** If you avoid lunch in order to offset a big family dinner, you'll probably eat more because you're extra hungry. Eat breakfast and lunch so you're able to control your appetite when the platters are passed your way.
 - **Exercise portion control.** Don't overload your plate. Take sensible portions of whatever comes your way, and you won't feel compelled to consume every last bite in order to avoid wasting food.
 - **Eat slowly.** Your stomach can fill up before you're aware of it, which means you may eat more than you really want or need to consume, leaving you stuffed and uncomfortable. Make an effort to put down your fork and chew thoroughly between bites, and drink plenty of water before and during your meal.
 - **Sit with the right people.** If possible, sit next to a companion whose eating habits mirror the example you want to follow. If your partner is an athlete with an enormous appetite, you'll tend to eat a similar amount, but if you're sitting next to someone who is watching his or her weight, chances are you'll exercise the same self-control.
 - **Focus on the holiday.** Remember that holidays are about more than just eating. Make an effort to talk to people and enjoy the season itself, in the moment.
 - **Get right back on track.** If none of this advice works then don't waste time beating yourself up over it. Just remind yourself of the long-term benefits of healthy eating to motivate your return to good habits.
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May you have warmth in your igloo, oil in your lamp, and peace in your heart.

~Inuit proverb



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