

Feminist Resolutions for 2016

It's February, but I'm thinking about New Year's resolutions. The start of the new year is a moment to review the year before, decide what you want to accomplish for the next year and figure out what bad habits to drop. Anything seems possible at the beginning of the year.

Every year has passed without a new me, who equated happiness and success with my weight and how much academic work I completed. At the start of 2016, I decided I'm over that noise.

New year ... same resolutions

For years, my own resolutions revolved around weight, goals, feelings and career. On January 1, I would resolve to lose 10 or 20 pounds, find a tenure-track job or finally be happy.

After the satisfied glow of resolving wore off, I felt worse about myself than I had before. When judging myself by society's vision of success, I felt like a failure. I critiqued my body and mind, and found myself wanting a different body, brain and life.

New Year's resolutions exist to tell us there's something wrong with who we are now. This ritual suggests that every self needs improvement: what will you be improving?

In 2015, the top resolutions were losing weight, followed closely by becoming organized, spending less and enjoying life to the fullest. Capitalism loves resolutions because you buy the equipment of a new you: fitness gear and equipment, diet plans and organizers. Then, you feel bad for spending more.

Only 8% of people achieve their resolutions. Obviously, something isn't working.

New year ... different resolutions

This year, I suggest a different approach. Instead of trying to match society's standards of femininity, beauty or success, start with the premise that you are enough.

Say it with me: "YOU ARE ENOUGH." Right now. Right this minute. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

With that in mind, here are some resolutions for 2016:

1. Take care of yourself. In the epilogue to *A Burst of Light*, Audre Lorde said, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." Self-care, then, is important because it forces us, especially women, to take care of ourselves first before we try to take care of the people around us.

In a culture that celebrates women's self-sacrifice, self-care is a radical act against the patriarchy. Women's lives and bodies matter, so we must take care of ourselves.

Self-care can include a host of activities, including exercise, quiet time, hair care and making sure to eat and sleep, but for the most part these acts should make you feel refreshed and ready to take on whatever comes next. As *WIHE's* editor Liana Silva often reminds me, "We must put on our oxygen masks first."

2. Be an advocate or ally. In "Seven Feminist Resolutions for the New Year," the American Association of Uni-

versity Women (AAUW) recommends being an ally for 2016: "In order to create real change, social justice movements need to involve people beyond the affected communities. These movements can succeed with supportive allies who advocate for equality."

To be an advocate or an ally requires doing your research about particular social issues, identifying your privilege and listening. Don't speak for other people, but make sure they have the ability to speak and be heard.

Support other people. Lobby for them. Offer up your platform to let other people be heard. And then, listen some more.

3. Support feminism. In the same article, the AAUW suggests that we stop getting bogged down in discussions over the label "feminism" and seek "more intergenerational and intersectional collaborations around identity issues like sex, gender, race, and class." In *Feminism Is for Everybody*, bell hooks defined feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression."

This year, pledge to work against sexism in ways both big and small. Remember that we live in a patriarchy that weighs heavily on our bodies and our minds, so interrogate your assumptions about women and gender. Engage other women in conversation. Listen to them, and try to figure out how we can make life better not only for ourselves, but also for new generations of girls.

4. Be as confident as a white man. Writer Sarah Hagi tweeted, "Lord, give me the confidence of mediocre white men." She's right; we should all aim to mimic the confidence of mediocre white men (MWM).

They apply for jobs even though they aren't fully qualified, pitch projects with no trepidation and say "no" to work that doesn't fit with their career goals. Rejection doesn't bother them.

When you aren't sure how to react, ask "what would a MWM do?" Be confident about your abilities. Know your strengths. Banish impostor syndrome. Get rid of doubt.

Your confidence in yourself should be just as sturdy as theirs because you're already awesome.

5. Don't be an asshole. At *The Establishment*, Ijeoma Oluo writes the "1 New Year's Resolution for You" and the only one you'll need for 2016 is to not be an asshole, which will improve not only your life, but the lives of everyone around you. Oluo hopes we'll be kinder people for this brand new year.

Here are some of her ways to "not be an asshole": respect pronouns, don't critique people's bodies, use turn signals, recycle, don't argue on the Internet and—most importantly—learn how to apologize if you've been an asshole.

This year, let's appreciate where we are, reach higher and be kinder to ourselves and others. Bring it on, 2016. We're ready! 🍷

—KJB

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