

Six NEW ideas to Inspire You in 2021  
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I tell my audiences that I hate the word “inspire” because inspiration lasts for maybe three days, and then we return to what we were doing before.

But...2020 was well...need I say more!

So as we gear up for another trip around the sun, I think you could use a little inspiration.

So...here are six excellent insights (Psychology Today, January – 2021) from psychologist Mark Travers, PhD to meet 2021 with an invigorated state of mind.

1. You weren't (necessarily) happier when you were younger.

Any new year evokes feelings of aging and loss. However, you CAN reframe this negative attitude by *deciding* you will be happier in 2021. In other words, *choose* to believe (and yes, it is choice we can make) that 2021 will be better.

In fact, research found optimism is lowest in people in their 20s, and then it rises into our 30s and 40s, peaking in the 50s, and gradually declining after that. Specifically, it was at 55 that we are the most optimistic.

However, at 73, I find myself feeling more optimistic than ever! That's why I love writing this stuff for you!

Another study found that life satisfaction showed *little decline* across the lifespan and, in some cases, it actually went up. The researchers found that in the Anglo world, life satisfaction tends to improve with age.

They also found that marriage and employment are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction across our lifespan.

2. Commitment is key

So what is the magic combination of factors that makes a relationship flourish?

Well...Mary and I love each far more now after 50 years. But believe me...it does NOT come from magic. It comes from our commitment we choose to make to each other...almost every moment.

In fact, [research](#) found that people with a steadfast belief that their partner was committed to the relationship were most likely to be in a flourishing relationship.

Interestingly, commitment mattered more than passion, support, affection, and sexual frequency.

3. We see the best in people.

The human mind is incredibly good at filling in our gaps of perception.

In fact, when we look at a person, research suggests that our minds err on the side of beauty. It found that incomplete photographs were judged to be significantly more attractive than complete photographs. It suggests that people fill in the missing information with optimistic inferences.

As we get older and *look* older, that is a good thing to know.

4. Set the right goals.

There's a big difference between setting goals and setting the *right* goals.

How do you know if you are setting the right goals? Research suggests that the following scale can help. Rate, on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) how well each of the following five reasons explains why you want to achieve the goals you do:

Because somebody else wants me to, or because I'll get something from someone if I do.

Because I would feel ashamed if I didn't.

Because I really believe it is an important goal to have.

Because of the fun and enjoyment which the goal will provide me.

Because it represents who I am and reflects what I value most in life.

If questions 3 through 5 described your goals, you are probably on the right track. If you felt that questions 1 and 2 applied better to your situation, then you might want to change course. That's because reasons 3-5 indicate that you are intrinsically motivated to pursue a goal while reasons 1 and 2 point to extrinsic motivation. (In other words, you are doing it because you feel you *have* to. And your brain hates it when you say, "I HAVE to do this!"

5. Be open, be positive, be straightforward.

Psychologists agree that there are hundreds of traits to describe someone's personality.

So which traits are in "healthy" individuals? Research found that high levels of openness to feelings, positive emotions, and straightforwardness were most indicative of a healthy personality.

6. You can be mindful and ambitious at the same time.

Mindfulness is two things. 1.) Continually paying attention to the present, and 2.) Observing our thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad.

This is healthy thinking!

Mindful individuals exhibit reduced stress levels, have better focus, and are less emotionally reactive.

But can you be mindful and ambitious?

Research found that ambitious personalities — that is, people who are socially self-confident, competitive, leader-like, and energetic — tend to be more mindful.

In conclusion, my dear reader — remember that your brain *locks* onto whatever YOU *choose* to be valuable. So this year...lock onto:

1. Things getting better this year.
2. Staying committed to the relationships you value most.
3. Seeing the best in people.
4. Setting goals that reflect who you are as a person.
5. Being open, positive, and straightforward.
6. Being mindful and ambitious.

And remember...your brain *believes* everything you tell it — so who knows what new doors may open when you do.

Wow!