

Ep #205 : Key Reminders for the New Year: Growth, Emotions, and Change



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With Your Host

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This time of year is filled with a lot of pressure to set big goals, overhaul habits, and, oftentimes, to chase a better version of yourself. But what if the most important thing isn't what you do, but what you remember?

In this episode, I'm sharing a list of reminders that I want to carry with me into the new year. These are things to remind me about how growth works, what emotions mean, and what change looks like, in addition to the very common ways that we sometimes misinterpret what it means and what it looks like when we're okay. So let's dive in.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, I'm Kristi Angevine, a physician, Master Certified Coach, Internal Family Systems informed practitioner, and host of this podcast, where we explore the deeper psychology behind why we do what we do.

So welcome to episode 205. And Happy New Year, if you're listening to this in real time. If you're a new listener, welcome to the podcast. It's so fun to have you here. And if you've been with me for the last 205 episodes, I'm so glad that you're here.

So when I was thinking about what I wanted to do for my first of the year podcast, I really wanted to have a list of things that were very simple that would help me remember grounding truths that could help settle me when I felt unsettled, and help me move towards growth and help me move towards change when sometimes it felt like that was impossible.

And the reason I wanted to do this is because I have found over the years that when I would look back on some of the struggles I would have, I would find almost the same themes, similar struggles, similar difficulties, and it was as if I'd had a little bit of amnesia and I'd forgotten lessons that I really thought I'd internalized or integrated not even that long ago.

And what I realized over the years was I was learning and relearning and discovering things that I thought I had already integrated. I thought I had already internalized not that long ago. And what came to me as one of the most important things that I could do for myself is to write myself a list of

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things that I really wish I could remember, and I could keep at the forefront of my mind.

So, as we enter the new year, this is where I want to offer a little bit of a different way of starting off your year. So there's a lot of noise at this time of year about goals and resolutions and commitment and things like vision boards or doing more of this or doing less of that. And while I love intention setting and I love setting a goal and figuring out what's in the way between where I am and where I want to go, today's episode is going to be a little bit different.

So instead of adding more pressure or adding perfectionism, I want to offer a very simple but powerful list of reminders. And these are things that I really want to remember this year. And they're things that have come back to me again and again and again, both personally and in my coaching. These are the kind of things that are grounding truths that can help steady you when you feel overwhelmed.

They're the things that I've returned to when I am caught in doubt, when I've got discomfort, and when I just have an inner tension that I can't shake. And they're universal enough that no matter where you are in your life or what season you're in, if you are listening to this and it is not New Year's of 2026, but it's the middle of the summer or it's next year, these things should resonate deeply for almost any season of your life. So let's dive in.

Number one: Progress doesn't always feel good. Progress doesn't always look like progress. Sometimes when things are working, when you are growing, when you are learning, when you are in the thick of creating something beautiful, it feels really uncomfortable. When familiar old patterns get disrupted, or things that you thought were smoothed out get all tangled and big feelings seem to take you over, it can feel disorienting. And some days you can feel like there's no hope. It's not possible for you to change. Your capacity is zero, and you feel like you're dying.

It feels horrible. And yet, what I have learned over and over and over again is that in those moments where things feel really terrible and it seems like

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I'm going backwards, oftentimes, these are the very moments where what is actually going on is progress, growth, and an integration or a shift that is really meaningful about insights or a shift in my capacity that is not narrowing, but is expanding.

And what I've found is that I don't remember this when I'm in the thick of feeling terrible. I don't remember that growth and progress often look and feel horrible before they look like the positive things that they actually are.

So if you are ever feeling tender or off or like you are just wobbling a little or a lot, it doesn't necessarily mean that something has gone wrong and that you are not moving towards something that is really meaningful to you. Many times, it actually means that something deeply important is in the process of shifting. And a dear friend of mine texted me the other day that it's like the snake getting rid of its skin. It's a new beginning. Sometimes, new beginnings, they don't feel so great.

Number two: In a very similar vein, sometimes when things get harder, the difficulty is not a stop sign, but actually a sign that you may be on the precipice of an extraordinary change. Think about physical therapy or learning to set boundaries or maybe showing up more vulnerably. Initially, there's often resistance or worry or discomfort. Not because you're regressing or because you're incapable or because there's something wrong with what you're doing, but because you are doing something unfamiliar and you are growing and you are getting better. It's like when your hands get really cold and then they thaw out and it's really uncomfortable before they get back to the temperature you'd like them to be at, but it's necessary.

So when things are really hard, and you really pause and examine what's at the core of what's difficult for you, you will oftentimes learn something really important

So let me just give you an example. You might be at your wits' end with your job. And maybe you're given five more tasks that, really, there's no time for them to fit in. And there's no compensation, and there's no support.

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And then your boss drops some petty criticism on you in a meeting. And the anger that comes brings massive clarity. You realize you are done.

You're either going to go find a new job, or you're going to make a major change to this one, and you are not worried about what people are going to think as you go towards that change, because now you have the courage to say enough is enough. And I don't know what's on the other side of this line that I'm drawing in the sand, but I know that I'm going to figure it out no matter what. And if that difficulty and that breaking point didn't come, you might just stay in this lackluster, kind of mediocre, soul-sucking job for 20 more years.

Number three: Regulated doesn't mean calm. Regulated means responsive. So as I discussed in one of the most recent episodes, there's an idea in personal development that when you have done all of your inner work, when you have really gone deep, when you have done lots of healing, when you are really intentional about managing your mind and being thoughtful and being reflective, that you will be serene and poised and composed and unbothered. You will be always composed even in the face of the biggest dumpster fire level of chaos. That's actually not true regulation. That's suppression or pretending or often times just sidestepping or bypassing something difficult.

Regulation means that you can feel fully and still stay connected to yourself. You can cry, you can yell, you can rage, you can shake, and you can still be grounded and anchored. You can respond instead of react. So, in internal family systems terms, we would say that you can be self-led and have big emotions.

So you can be regulated even as you are really angry, if there's a little bit of courage or clarity with that anger. You can be regulated even as you are deeply sad and sobbing because you have compassion right alongside your sadness and a willingness to meet yourself where you're at while you are feeling undone. Regulation is not calm. Regulation is being responsive and aware as you're having your emotions. Which is to say your big

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emotions, they're not a sign of failure. They might be hard. They might feel terrible. We might want them to go away. But they're oftentimes signs that your system trusts you enough to allow you to feel big things.

All right, number four: Just because something has been going on for a really long time, does not mean that it cannot change, and it doesn't mean that change will take as long as it took you to develop that pattern or as long as that pattern has been around. Longstanding habits, they can shift faster than you think. And I always forget this, even though this is my bread and butter.

When I see it in other people, I can tell them, hey, it's deeply ingrained. It's been here for four decades, but change can happen. But when it's me, and I look back over one year, three years, five years, and I see a persistent struggle that has really been difficult for me, I can forget all of that.

So the reminder is long-standing habits are much more malleable. And this is because when something changes internally, a belief, a perspective, a sense of safety, that one shift can alter everything downstream. So even if a belief took root in 1982, it can be released in 2026, and it does not need to take you 40 years to do it.

Number five: strategies that currently don't work anymore, they were once brilliant solutions and resourceful adaptations. Whether it is hyper-independence, people pleasing, hypervigilance, overextending, never receiving help, perfectionism, beating yourself up, overworking, numbing, avoiding conflict, these patterns, they didn't come out of nowhere. They are not signs of a weak personality or a defect in you as a human.

These patterns developed for a good reason, and at some point in your life, they helped you navigate something difficult and get results that were good enough. And when you can recognize that strategies that have an underbelly today, that have maybe overstayed their welcome, or that are dragging you down, it can help you meet yourself with compassion instead of shame. And when you can do that, then you don't just give yourself a

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pass and stay stuck. That is when you can actually have real change, because trying to make change while you are judging yourself is nearly impossible, or it's really slow. But add a little of compassion and change is faster and sustainable.

Number six: Change requires effort and commitment, but this is not as hard as staying stuck. So doing work, it always takes something. There is a little bit of oomph, a little bit of effort, a little bit of, I don't want to do this, but you know what, it's important, so I'm going to do it. But when you are living out of alignment, when you are stuck where you are, that takes so much more effort, and it is so much harder to do than it is to put in the little bit of effort to actually make the change.

Stuckness and feeling like you can't change is so exhausting. And I think we forget that. When I am really exhausted, and I think about changing and doing something that I want to do, that seems like it would give me more energy, I can't fathom doing extra. And I forget that, wow, I may be exhausted not because my task in front of me is so horrible, but because I'm thinking I'm stuck, and if I take a little bit of effort, then it's not going to be as hard as staying where I am. So, just remember, sometimes staying put is so much harder than that bit of effort that it takes to initiate change.

All right, number seven: Emotions carry intelligence. If you are trying to get rid of your emotions before you understand them, they will stick around and they will get more and more difficult to handle. When we suppress or try to sidestep or try to rush past and solve our emotions, we miss whatever message they're carrying. And that message doesn't just disappear, it just waits.

And sometimes it will start yelling at us. And this is where you have some anxiety and then it ratchets up and turns into panic and then it's overwhelm and then it's every day, or it just sits back there nagging and nagging and nagging. And if you push it away and push it away and push it away, it's like sending back a letter that arrived at your house because you don't want to

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open it, and it keeps getting returned to you. Emotions bring you something important just like a letter.

And if it helps to think about emotions in a way that's a little bit more neutral, you can think about them as just data. Something happens, you have an emotion, and that is data about how you're interpreting things, what you're picking up on. It can even be a way that your intuition is manifesting for you. It is your system's way of saying, hey, something important's going on. Something matters here. So instead of asking, how do I make this go away? How do I feel better? Try asking, what is this emotion trying to tell me?

Number eight: Trauma isn't always because of what happened, but many times it's caused by what was missing. So trauma, it's not just about the events or what terrible mistreatment occurred, but trauma's impact can occur when something was missing, when something did not happen.

So you were fed, you were cared for, you were housed, but maybe nobody took your emotions seriously. They were ignored or dismissed or minimized, or something that was pretty ordinary happened and, well, you were alone and you had nobody to talk you through it, or you didn't understand it and you didn't have a context and there wasn't somebody there to translate it for you or give it meaning or tell you what to do or help you figure out how to navigate it or tell you when it was going to be over.

So, on paper, you look fine. There's no abuse, there's no ACEs, there's no attachment trauma. You had friendly parents, you've got a good job. But you had repetitive experiences where what you needed, safety, validation, protection, repair, basic understanding of what was going on, it wasn't there. So things that look benign, you navigated alone, and it was too much. It was too soon. It happened for too long without care, without context, without a sense of agency. And this is how you can miss trauma.

Things that had a meaningful and defining impact on you because you look back and you don't see a list of horrific tragedies. But once you change your definition of trauma to include missing important things and to include

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times where things that should have been there weren't, then you can understand better. And this is how you can realize that change and healing for this type of trauma, where something is missing, will end up including acknowledging what was missing, and then finding ways to ensure that this doesn't go missing again.

Number nine: If you've been with me for a while, you've probably heard me say that awareness precedes change, but awareness alone is not sufficient. It's not enough. It has to be paired with some sort of warmth or compassion or curiosity. When we notice a pattern, our reflex might be to have awareness of that pattern and then instantly to judge it or to try to fix it or to try to get out of it. But that will just keep us looping because we can be aware, but if we are not curious, if we are not kind, change just stalls.

So awareness plus curiosity, that is the gateway. Awareness plus care, that's where you get your momentum. So try this. If you are trying to build in change, first you need to be aware of what is going on. What are you thinking? How are you feeling? What are you doing? When is it happening? What's making change hard? You need to bring in awareness of things that you normally don't pay attention to. And then you need to also bring in compassion, care, and curiosity to what you're noticing. And as soon as you do that, solutions, shifts, change, they are so much easier.

Number 10: This is something I wish I could actually believe and remember all the time. The hardest times that I go through are when I forget this. So here it is. You are not the problem. You are not broken. You simply have a strategy that is outdated. So this is a really big one.

When I am struggling, I will oftentimes forget that I am not the problem, but I am approaching things or doing things that maybe are not compatible with the situation. And I'm doing that because it is an approach that worked maybe in another time, but maybe just doesn't fit this particular problem that I've got.

So let me just be your reminder. You do not need a personality transplant. You don't need to become somebody new. Sometimes you just need

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different tools for this current chapter of your life. What worked before just may not serve you now. And that doesn't mean that you were wrong in the past, and it doesn't mean that you're wrong now. It just means that some of your old solutions you may have outgrown, or some of your old solutions just may not be the right tool for this job.

So, before I close, I want to share a little bit of neuroscience that helps explain why some of these reminders matter so much. When we're under stress or when we are stuck in old habits, our amygdala, it is our brain's emotion center, it kicks into high gear into high alert. And when our amygdala is working really hard, our prefrontal cortex and the parts of our brain that are responsible for reflection and perspective, they basically go offline, which is why it's really hard to be curious or thoughtful in the moment.

And when we're under lots of stress, we will often times default to old conclusions about ourselves and the world. And we'll believe that we're not good enough, that we're failures, that we're not capable, that we're not likable, etc, etc. And when we go to that place, we will sometimes forget that we are not actually broken, and it's not that we cannot change. It's just when we have lots of stress, our brains do this. They go to what we know without much reflection. And this is so that we will survive, so to speak, and not sit around overthinking when maybe we should run or fight or play dead.

So when you find yourself in a struggle, it is often just because there's an old protective mechanism plus maybe some identity-based conclusions that are kicking in. And if that's where you stay stuck, and you stay in a place where your emotions are big, you make it mean terrible things about yourself, you feel like you're stuck, and you don't see any way out, it's very easy to make it mean that you're never going to change and that you're the problem.

But here's something that can be really helpful to remember. When your nervous system starts feeling safer, when you've actually made some really

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important shifts, you essentially deep down know that you can handle big emotions because big emotions are simply just messengers surfacing with important data for you.

So sometimes when you have big emotions, it's not because something is wrong. The bigness of the emotion, the intensity of the emotion does not correlate to the bigness or the intensity or severity of the problem. It's simply because something important is present, and your system is saying, now you are capable enough and you are safe enough to process this. So, in other words, what feels like failing and what feels like you're falling apart might actually be the precursor to huge growth and to new integration of deep wisdom that can really change everything going forward.

So just remember, sometimes the big emotions that might have you concluding really negative things about yourself might actually be there because you have the capacity to feel them now. Your whole system trusts you've got this. And when you know that your emotions are messengers and you can listen in carefully and bring in compassion, that is when change is so much easier, even when things feel terrible.

So, as we begin this new year, let this be the year that you stop measuring your success by how composed you are. Let this be the year that you stop interpreting all of your emotions as a sign of your personal failure. And let this be the year that you meet yourself where you are with care and clarity and less urgency to fix. And I would encourage you to write down a list of the important reminders that you need for yourself.

So thank you for being here, and whether you're starting fresh or you're continuing something that's already in motion, you are doing more than enough, and you are so much more resourceful than you're probably giving yourself credit for. I look forward to talking to you next week, and until then, stay curious and be kind to yourself.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit HabitsOnPurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.