***Begin with the End in Mind***

*- by Diane Weller*

Do you believe in making New Year’s resolutions?  If not, it is okay because...

There is a practice more powerful than making resolutions – BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND.  The action of beginning can apply to:

* a new calendar year
* a new job
* a business project
* a philanthropic project
* a play project like hosting a party or other gathering
* a conversation
* retirement
* and many other things

I’m talking about Stephen Covey’s habit #2 in his masterpiece work *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.  This habit is based on imagination--the ability to envision in your mind what you cannot at present see with your eyes.  Life is full of opportunity for fresh starts.  Would you like to be a better version of yourself?  Perhaps you'd like to be doing different work or you'd like to see yourself with a new circle of friends.  Whatever it is for you, imagine being more effective in work, play and relationship, with self and others.  As Covey suggests, if you don’t make a conscious effort to visualize who you are and what you want in life, then you empower other people and circumstances to shape you and your life by default.

You might be asking, “**Why is it so important that I begin with the end in mind?**”  It is only by staying clear about your desired direction and destination that you can stay guided and on course to making things happen. Think about this on an individual level and on a team or organization level. Would you start building a house without a blueprint?

So now you are probably asking, “**How do I begin with the end in mind?**” You begin with the end in mind by giving consideration to the *3 P’s*:

* a Plan – or a roadmap or blueprint, whatever you want to call it
* Priorities – the most important places to spend your time to achieve your desired results
* People – the right voices to listen to

While planning can be useful and even necessary to be effective, I caution against over-planning, so that you allow room for discovery along the way. To quote Oprah, “Sometimes when you plan a little less, you experience a little more.” This makes so much sense! When you plan out every last detail, you deny yourself the opportunity of pleasant surprises, new experiences and perhaps even new thought to pop up along the way. Admittedly this is a good reminder to self, as I try to calm my nerves about my upcoming overseas trip not yet having the logistics worked out, as my usual self would like! I’m going to trust that, if I arrive a bit unplanned, an experience of a life time will present itself that otherwise would not have occurred.

Having priorities is also important so that the successes you are having are not coming at the expense of things that are far more valuable. In other words, spend your time in the right places. Last year I had a few, what I will call, empty victories – successes that came, but at the expense of other things that would have moved me closer to my desired destination.

In regard to people, I once heard someone say “Show me your friends and I'll show you your future”. It’s helpful to consider the following questions that have been shared by author Elizabeth Gilbert:

* Do I trust this person’s taste and judgment?
* Does this person understand what I'm trying to create here?
* Does this person genuinely want me to succeed?
* Is this person capable of delivering the truth to me in a sensitive and compassionate manner?

**What do you want the new year to bring to your life?**

Remember to begin with the end in mind.