



# HELPING HANDS



## Starting the New Year Strong: A Practical Guide to a Fresh Beginning

Compiled by CHTGPT5

As a new year begins, many of us feel a mix of hope and pressure. Hope, because a fresh start is full of possibility. Pressure, because we're told this is the moment to re-invent ourselves, set ambitious resolutions, and transform overnight. The truth is the best way to start a new year isn't with grand promises or drastic change - it's with clarity, intention, and a steady, sustainable approach.



The new year is best seen as a reset, not a restart. You don't need to become someone else. You simply get the opportunity to refine what's already working and gently course correct what isn't.

### Begin with reflection, not resolution

Before looking ahead, take a moment to look back. Reflection is one of the most underrated tools for growth. Ask yourself a few simple questions: What went well last year? What drained your energy? What are you proud of? What would you do differently if you could?

This isn't about judgment or regret. It's about understanding patterns. When you reflect honestly, you gain insight into what truly matters to you far more valuable than any generic goal-setting template. Write these reflections down. Seeing them on paper creates clarity and makes your next steps more intentional.

### Set intentions, not just goals

Goals are useful, but intentions give them meaning. A goal might be "exercise more," while an intention might be "care for my body so I have more energy and confidence." Intentions focus on *why*, not just *what*. When setting intentions for the year, keep them realistic and aligned with your values. Choose fewer intentions and commit to them deeply rather than scattering your energy across too many ambitions.

### Start small and build momentum

Real change begins with small, repeatable actions. If you want to read more, start with ten minutes a day. If you want to improve your finances, begin by tracking expenses for one month. If you want to improve relationships, start by checking in with one person each week. Small habits reduce resistance. They make it easier to show up, especially on days when motivation is low. Over time, these small actions build confidence, momentum, and lasting change.

### Create space before adding more

The start of the year is an ideal time to simplify. Before adding new commitments, look for things you can remove. De-clutter your schedule, your workspace, and even your digital life. Unsubscribe from emails you never read. Reconsider obligations that no longer serve you. Creating space isn't about doing less for the sake of it—it's about making room for what matters most.

### Design supportive routines

Willpower is unreliable, especially during busy or stressful seasons. Routines, on the other hand, do the heavy lifting for you. A supportive anchor your day and make good habits easier to maintain. Keep routines simple. A few consistent actions like planning tomorrow morning, or setting aside quiet time before bed, stepping outside in the can dramatically improve focus and well-being. The goal isn't perfection,



but reliability.

**Anticipate setbacks**

A strong start to the year doesn't mean a flawless one. There will be missed days, unexpected challenges, and moments of doubt. This is normal. The difference between giving up and moving forward is how you respond when things don't go as planned. Instead of seeing setbacks as failure, view them as feedback. Adjust, recommit, and continue. Progress is rarely linear, and resilience is built by continuing even imperfectly.

**Reconnect with what excites you**



Finally, don't forget joy. A new year isn't only about discipline and improvement; it's also about curiosity, creativity, and enjoyment. Make space for things that energize you. Hobbies, learning, connection, and rest can all bring joy to you. When your goals are supported by genuine excitement and meaning, they stop feeling like obligations and start feeling like opportunities.

The best way to start the new year is with intention, patience, and self-compassion. You don't need to have everything figured out on day one. You just need to take the next small, thoughtful step forward and keep going. Let's make it a year built not on pressure, but on purpose.

Wishing you a meaningful, uplifting, and beautiful New Year!

Your Local Employee Assistance Program representative can help you as you begin the process of change and setting intentions in the New Year. Their contact information is in the box below.

IAM  
Peer  
Employee  
Assistance Program



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations; they are trained to make a basic evaluation of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experience

Southwest Airlines ATL IAM EAP Contact

IAM EAP Director, District 142  
Paul Shultz  
704-907-3563 E-mail: pmschultz@att.net

**How to set an Intention**

Setting an intention is one of the most powerful ways to begin a new season. Unlike goals, which focus on outcomes, an intention focuses on how you want to live, think, or show up each day. It acts as a compass, helping you make decisions with clarity and alignment.

To set an effective intention, start with reflection. Ask yourself what you need most right now. More calm? Focus? Confidence? Connection? An intention should respond to your current reality, not an idealized version of who you think you *should* be.

Next, keep it clear and concise. A strong intention can often be captured in a single phrase, such as "move through my days with patience" or "choose progress over perfection." If it feels heavy or complicated, simplify it.

Finally, return to your intention regularly. Revisit it in the morning, reflect on it in the evening, or use it as a filter when making choices. An intention works not because it's ambitious, but because it's consistent.

When your actions are guided by intention, growth becomes steadier, more meaningful, and far more sustainable.