

A New Year, A New Start

By John Michalak

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New Year’s is a time when people look forward to a fresh start. A fresh start often means resolutions and help with self-help promises. Who better to guide someone through the process than Michael Angelo Caruso? Caruso has delivered more than 1,000 presentations and keynote speeches on the topics of personal and professional development. He is founder and president of the Edison House, a Michigan-based consulting firm. Caruso has educated and entertained audiences all over the world, drawing on a previous career in the telecommunications industry and a decade as a professional musician. Daily reporter John Michalak talked with Caruso for this Inner-view.

Why are resolutions such a big deal around New Year’s? Is it a healthy practice?

People used to slaughter livestock around the holidays if the animals were not likely to live through winter. The idea of slaughtering bad habits is an extension of the that practice. I think it’s healthy to rub out bad habits any time of year.

What are the most frequent types of resolutions people make?

Most people pledge to quit smoking, to lose weight or to feel better. My newest book, “5 Cool Ideas for Better Working, Living & Feeling” has some killer ideas on how to maintain your body weight, how to be happier and how to be healthier.

What advice would you give to people making them?

In my seminars and in coaching sessions, I teach people to have SMART goals, which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely. For example, a goal to quit smoking may not be realistic if one still enjoys smoking. A goal to lose weight should be measurable. A person who pledges to lose 10 pounds before St. Patrick’s Day has a goal that can be measured.

Why do some people keep their resolutions, while others are doomed to failure?

Most people are not committed to a systematic plan that includes follow through. For instance, a person who wants to lose weight probably should not buy potato chips. Yet, this same person who allegedly wants to lose weight still brings chips home from the grocery store.

You're in the self-help business. What can people do in 2004 to make their lives and themselves better?

Personal and professional development occur over time. Self-improvement is a process that evolves through a series of good decisions. Anyone can make subtle or even serious life changes with a well-conceived plan. Modeling can be a great way to improve yourself. Read what smart people read and you are likely to become smart. Eat what thin people eat and you are likely to become thin. Find a process and stick with it.

What are the biggest things people do over the year to prevent themselves from attaining better and happier lives both on and off the job?

I think we all have negative angels that encourage us to make bad decisions. Negative angels can be friends, co-workers and relatives. Of course, we can also be negative angels for ourselves. The key to being happy on and off the job is to cancel the messages from negative angels with messages from positive angels. Positive angels can be friends, co-workers, relatives and of course, we can be positive angels for ourselves. Spend more time with positive people and positive information in 2004.

Michael Angelo Caruso is President of the Edison House, a Detroit-based communication company. He is the author of "5 Cool Ideas for Better Working Living & Feeling," "Hmmm . . . Little Ideas With BIG Results" and the audio book, "Dear Michael Angelo – A Father's Life Lessons To His Son." Mr. Caruso delivers 180 presentations per year. Click [here] to request booking information. Mr. Caruso can be reached at 248/546-9140 and at www.EdisonHouse.com.
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