

THE FUTURE IS YOURS

REAL-WORLD ADVICE FOR MAKING

2010

THE BEST YEAR EVER.

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to start anew. So often, people can get so set in their ways that even if they wanted to attempt a new project, they've gotten to the point where asking for help or advice seems like it's harder than the task to be undertaken. January is the best month for making resolutions to improve existing, but not ideal, conditions—because January is *now*, and there is never a better time than the present for self-exploration and self-improvement. Here are some worthwhile goals along with advice on how to take the first steps for achieving them.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY MOSS

LIFE AFTER KIDS (YOURS)

After staying home for five years with her two young children, Karen Pery of West Hills felt she was no longer relevant in the workforce. "It's horrible to view yourself that way, but I'd become immersed in my children's lives and what was important to them," says Pery, who is a trained coach with a graduate degree in counseling. "I didn't know who I was anymore."

But then Pery experienced a wake-up call one day—away from her kids. "I found value separate from them and [I] want other women to feel the same way. It takes a lot of perception-shifting to realize you're still creative, interesting, and smart, but it's possible."

Pery founded Motherhood Reinvented, a life-coaching company that helps women overcome feeling "stuck." She offers individual and group coaching, and conducts workshops for local moms' groups. "We discuss what makes women feel powerful and identify ways to achieve their dreams. The issue usually isn't figuring out what they want to do, but about being ready to make new choices. I help remove obstacles that are holding them back," says Pery.

Bette Alkazian, a licensed marriage and family therapist and founder of Balanced Parenting in Westlake Village, also offers these tips to women attempting to reclaim themselves after having children: 1) Maintain adult interaction, whether it's with other parents, or, for example, with people in line in the grocery store. Be resourceful and creative about reaching out. 2) Don't let your passions take a backseat until the kids are gone; do what you can now to foster your interests. 3) Take time for yourself, even if it means wandering around the bookstore for an hour. "We have so much more to give if we're refreshed. Find whatever the happy place is for you," says Alkazian.

For more information about Motherhood Reinvented, go to www.karenpery.com or e-mail karen@karenpery.com for a complimentary 30-minute phone session.

Join Bette Alkazian for free advice on the first Tuesday of every month, including January 5 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at Chocolatine (2955 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks). To learn more, call 805-230-2464 or go to www.balancedparenting.com.

— Cynthia House Nooney

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THE HAPPY PLACE
IS FOR YOU."

—BETTE ALKAZIAN, BALANCED
PARENTING, WESTLAKE VILLAGE

