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8 Rules to Live by in 2021

Because 2020 threw the rule book out.



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Image: On the Couch

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” — (attributed to) Maya Angelou

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It was the sucker punch we didn't see coming.

It was traumatic, confusing, isolating, uncertain; it left us exhausted and shaking our heads about where those 12 months actually went.

Many are still neck-deep in the pandemic and the uncertainty rages on. But 2020 did us one favour. It forced us to think about our lives; about what we want from them, who we want in them, how we spend our time, where the whole ship's headed. And that's a good thing.

A new year is (in theory) a time for reflection and change; it's also a time where nothing happens at all if we don't Do Something.

So the challenge is to take a moment to reflect on the good and bad bits of 2020 and see what you can carry forward.

Here's a list of Stuff to Do (or not) in 2021.

8 Rules to Live By in 2021

1. Don't be a dick (too often).

We like to think 2020 brought out the goodness-and-kindness in us — but it brought a lot of bad behaviour too. (Think supermarket goods stockpiling and quarantine curfew busting.) For 2021, try to think beyond yourself. If you can't be kind, at least don't be mean. Don't compromise others' health, work, livelihoods or shot at happiness by doing dumb, selfish or nasty stuff. Don't tweet it either. Writer Elizabeth Gilbert said: “it's so easy not to be a dick”. Actually, it's quite hard to never be a dick. So just try to keep a lid on it.

2. Don't over-commit yourself.

It always strikes me as bizarre that busyness is a badge of honour. Maybe it is, but only to the person wearing it. The rest of us don't care; we would rather have your attention.

Create some physical and mental space for yourself to do your own thing, develop your own character, do whatever the hell you like. Stop saying yes to everything. Stop trying to please everyone. Stop trying to be the nicest person on the block. You don't have to be mega-productive to be a cool person. You just have to be a cool person.

3. Remember the little things matter.

Being able to hug your family or friends, buy a coffee or a takeaway meal, go for a bush walk (or any walk), wander over to a friend's place, (really) seeing the beauty in nature — we now know these are not things we should take for granted. Yet we will. We'll get all busy and important again and forget — which is a shame. Invest in the little things.

4. Be flexible in your vision.

People who operate with a rigid mindset felt the pain this year because nothing ran in straight lines. The predictable became unpredictable. The unpredictable became weird and scary. The case for being adaptable, for being able to go with the ebb and flow was delivered to us in truckloads. And we need to stay that way — because we don't know what's up ahead. Come to think of it, we never did.

5. When you're with someone, be with them.

Being present is arguably the coolest human trait, especially in a world of high distraction and phones that can do everything. If you are going to spend time with someone, be fully there. Otherwise do them a favour and stay home.

6. Don't waste time on things you can't control.

2020's big reveal was how many things are out of our control, and how fast they can go there. It's normal to worry but it's futile to worry about things we can't change. It's good to have opinions but it's unhealthy to overinvest in the importance of them. No-one cares that much what you think unless you are running a country and have the power to impose lockdowns. Focus on the things you CAN do (or do something about) — especially those under your own roof.

7. Choose one meaningful project.

Don't make a dry resolution you'll have binned within a month. Don't write a list of goals that has you yawning before you've tacked it on the fridge. Goals should excite, not bore, you. Just choose one cool, meaningful project for the year, something that will advance your life or make you feel good about yourself. And commit to doing it.

8. Do your best.

Not your Perfectionist Best — that's destructive. But, wherever you are in life right now, step towards whatever you fear and try as hard as you can. Deliver the best of what's in you. You can't ask more of yourself than that.

8 Signs You Have a Rich Life
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