

What Will the New Year Bring?

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2012 is here and all around the world we are living in some of the best and worst of times. Undoubtedly, we look towards the New Year with trepidation. The economic dip brings with it a lot uncertainty and anxiety. Many have lost their jobs and many more will lose their jobs in 2012. Many have lost their homes in the infamous mortgage meltdown. The economic security that many immigrants came to America in search of is no longer accessible. Experts foresee that 2012 will not be a bearer of good tidings for many families in America.

In the midst of all of these gloomy forecasts we must pause to put things into their proper perspectives. The most important focal point that we all need to remember is that material things will come and go but what really matters is family. This year we need to resolve that more than worrying about providing our families with material things we need to seek every opportunity to create special memories with them. This means that we also need to re-think ways for our children and us to spend more time together.

Instead of each family member spending time in seclusion behind their private computer and TV screens, we need to get the family together to watch the news, a movie, or a favorite sit-com together. Instead of everyone grabbing something to eat on the streets, why not plan to have more dinners together as a family? This means cooking dinner from scratch and sitting together to enjoy it – the whole family. Instead of spending money and indulging our and the children's cravings, why not give them a fixed allowance and teach them how to save and budget?

Family must be priority in 2012, and there is no better time for a family to begin a fresh start than at the beginning of a new year. After all the customary holiday activities have come and gone it is time for the family to regroup. A wise family can always make use of such an opportunity to strengthen their forces for the challenges ahead. The beginning of the year is also an ideal time to set sights on new goals for the year ahead.

A family is a team. Just like a group of athletes or corporate managers, a family needs to come together and strategize for their success. A family without a plan stands the chance of running into constant conflicts. Another negative outcome of not having a family plan is the disengagement of family members. This happens when everyone is doing his or her own thing and no one is accountable to anyone. Parents need to understand that it is their responsibility to not only provide for their families but to empower their families emotionally and spiritually. A

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family plan for success that includes specific strategies to achieve both family and individual goals can serve as an excellent empowerment tool.

Evaluate your family's success in 2011 by asking yourself the following three questions:

What were some of the challenges my family faced in 2011? Perhaps credit card debt, children did not do well in school, unemployment, and lack of communication between family members.

Where you able to overcome these challenges? If your answer is no, then know that those same challenges will probably be with you again in 2012 unless you create a plan to overcome them.

What are some of the goals that I would like my family to accomplish in 2012? Perhaps you will like to get out of debt, help the children do better in school, dedicate more time to quality family time.

Your family can have all these things if you decide to make a fresh start by creating a family plan. Parenting coach Rob Stringer in "Family Goal Setting" suggests that: "Successful families don't just happen. They take time, talent and planning." Immigrant families will do well to have clear plans to achieve their goals. 2012 will only bring what we consciously invest into it. Here are some modified suggestions of Stringer's Family Goal Setting Plan that the immigrant family can apply:

1. Schedule a meeting: Both parents, in cases where both are available, need to be together and on the same page for this plan to be successful. It is important that parents meet together first and plan their presentation for the family meeting. Of course during the meeting there should be no TV, cell phones, electronic games will be turned off. This is a family business meeting and it should be treated as such.
2. Reflect on the past year – Have the family talk and reflect on some of the difficulties and challenges they faced in 2011. Have individual members share how the year went for them personally, in school, or at work. Parents should listen with an open heart and not judge, criticize or scold their children for what they have to say.
3. Set individual goals – Have each family member come up with 3 personal goals that they would like to accomplish in 2012. Have them talk about why these goals are important to them. Also have them share how they would like the family to help them to accomplish these goals.
4. Set family goals – Ask every member of the family to come up with 3 goals that as a family you can work to accomplish in 2012. Have everyone share his or her goals for the family. Choose goals that are achievable in one year.
5. Discuss strategies – This is the time to start a discussion on specific steps that the family can take to help accomplish these goals. Some steps might require the family to spend less money on non-essentials, or dedicate a couple of hours of personal time to be with the family.
6. Write a plan of action – Have the children write up the family's goals and post it in the kitchen where everyone can see it. Whenever a family member seems to be going off course he or she can always be pointed back to the family's plan.

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