



Just One Word

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Just one word will change your life. It takes only one word, as long as you commit to it and use it.

Are you interested?

So, this means that there is something you would like to change, something you would like to improve on. This is very good — you can take a look at yourself and your life, to see that an improvement is clearly needed. This is the first step, an assessment of your situation, which can only happen when you let go of objecting to the way things are. When you are engrossed in your objections to life as-it-is, you cannot see clearly. You cannot make decisions and you cannot effect change. First, you must embrace the reality of where you are and who you are, and then you can see that improvement is needed.

Then the next step is: you choose to change. Even if you think that the needed change is outside of you, you must put forth effort to accomplish the change — any change. It is actually an inner change (a change in you) that makes everything happen, and that will take effort. Continuing to perpetuate your well-established habits doesn't require any effort. It is easy, and it perpetuates your pain. To know that you desire a change is acknowledgement of a two-fold desire: to want freedom from pain and to want to be happy. Both of these are important goals, and they are within your reach, but you must put forth some effort to attain them. The effort is an inner effort, your own effort to improve yourself. The first step is to choose to do it. Make it simple, and do it.

How do you make it simple? Choose one word for your change. Pick a quality you would like to cultivate: *patience, compassion, perseverance, kindness, generosity...* There are so many virtues to choose from! There are so many you can add to the good qualities you already have. You have strengths, you have virtues, you have a noble character that is expressed in many ways. In these areas of your life, you have no problems at all. You can rely on the way you consistently live these qualities. Others call on you for these strengths and you are there for them. There is no inner change needed here.

Now is the time to go further. Take a look in the mirror to see where your blemishes are. You have this opportunity every day, of course, but this is a special time — the new year. The winter solstice has passed and the Northern Hemisphere enjoys lengthening days. Our Aussie Svaroopis are moving into a time of inner focus, the feeling of hibernation that the shorter days provide. Either of these provides fertile soil for the new year plantings — the seeds of your own growth. You can choose in what way you would like to grow and change.

The whole world celebrates new beginnings at this time; it is your opportunity to harness the power of that synchronicity. Take a look at yourself and see what quality you would like to cultivate in your life. Pick one to work on and give it a whole year of effort. In the beginning, it will require constant effort. But in a short time it will become a habit to cultivate this quality. It continues to grow in you even beyond habit and it becomes part of your character, so you can carry it into the next year as another one of your strengths.

Would you like to become *punctual, courteous* or *diligent*? Maybe your word for the year is "*healthy*." Perhaps you want to *listen* (more than you speak) – or maybe you need to *speak up* more. You could choose to cultivate *enthusiasm, gratitude, or contentment*. It doesn't really matter what you choose because when you work on one thing, all the others come along for you. Yoga even offers you a powerful list to choose from in the classical lists of *yamas* (restraints) and *niyamas* (observances). These are spiritual teachings about how a yogi relates to the world outside (*yamas*) and how to live with yourself in the world (*niyamas*):

yamas — how to relate to the world

<i>ahimsa</i>	not causing harm to anyone or anything for any reason
<i>satya</i>	not telling a lie, no lies of any kind at any time
<i>asteya</i>	not stealing, not taking something that you are not due
<i>brahmacharya</i>	celibacy, owning and directing your own sexuality, not obsessing on sex
<i>aparigraha</i>	non-greediness, non-acquisitiveness — this means that you stop shopping!

niyamas — how to live with yourself in the world

<i>shaucha</i>	purity — in your environment, your actions, your speech and your thoughts
<i>santosha</i>	cultivate contentment — a dynamic inner condition of peace and fullness
<i>tapas</i>	austerity — tackle the hard stuff and see it all the way through
<i>svadhyaya</i>	study of the Self — chanting and study of yoga's texts, which explain the depth and breadth of its spiritual philosophy
<i>ishvara-pranidhana</i>	surrender to God — living in the flow of grace, living in the Knowing (inside and outside)

Here's how it works: you make a resolution, a New Year's resolution. You resolve to improve yourself. I know that the current buzzword is intention, but it is not the same as resolution. For most people, setting an intention is about the same as wishing on a star. To say that you have an intention is not the same as to resolve to accomplish it. Resolution is intention PLUS your own effort. You do have to intend the change — this is your intention. This is your free will. Yoga says that the human being has free will, which is one of the characteristics of divine consciousness that shows up in every individual. So you have will, and now is the time to use it. It means you have to work at it.

Perhaps this is why New Year's resolutions have become so unpopular — the effort that is needed. Just saying the words, or even writing them down on a piece of paper doesn't work. You have to put more of yourself into it than that. There are a number of things you can do that will help.

- Tell other people what virtue you are cultivating. Enlist them in the process to support you, or you could even inspire them to a similar personal upliftment. Talk about the virtue you have chosen with them. Tell stories of your successes (and your near-misses).
- Read about the virtue you have chosen. Look it up in a dictionary. Look it up on-line. Read biographies of people or interview family members or friends who have this virtue. Do some research and allow others to inspire you.
- Put your one word on your bathroom mirror, kitchen window, dashboard in your car, etc. Make it your computer screensaver. Make a journal with the word on the front and write in it every night before you go to bed.
- Create a bulletin board at your yoga studio and enlist some yoga-buddies in the process. Go out for a cup of tea or a meal and encourage one another in the process.

Master Yoga would like to support you in your endeavor. Send an email to justoneword@masteryoga.org and put your one word in the email. We will return your email to you in March, just as a reminder, in case you were losing track of your resolution.

Perhaps your one word will be "*less*" — less food, less hurry, less worry, less possessions, etc. Maybe it will be "*more*" — more yoga, more forthcoming with yourself, more responsive, more present. Maybe you will choose something as simple as "*smile*." Remember to make it simple: just one word.

Harness the power of your own will — choose to grow and change. You must make an effort or it will not happen. The time is now. The one to work on is you. The only one who can do it is you. This is yoga.

Namaste,



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