

## AN ORGANIZED LIFE

## Look, listen and approach this year with curiosity



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**I pride myself in my ability to put words on paper.**

It is not uncommon for me to write two, three, sometimes four letters to family and friends in a week. Yes, the old-fashioned kind of letter that requires paper, pen, an envelope and a stamp.

Writing gives me the opportunity to sit down and slow down. For those who know me well, those are activities in which I have much room for improvement.

Lately, however, my words seem stuck.

I could blame my writer's block on 2020, correct? An easy target given the painful journey of the past 12 months. Pandemic, derecho, division, loss, uncertainty, exhaustion.

As I contemplated what words of wisdom I could share, thoughts were swirling, which can be both a blessing and a curse. I'm going to look at the swirl as a blessing.

Here is where I will start. As a professional organizer, it is my responsibility to look at a situation and figure out a way to make it better. To set my foundation for a new year, I write out actions to guide me. At the beginning of 2020, my actions were: be brave, release expectations, seek connection, feel courageously, relax peacefully.

Well, bravery, releasing expectations and feeling courageously all came into play, albeit in a very different way than I had anticipated. Connection and peace will need to be patient.

For 2021, I have written out foundational actions, and I added three questions to guide me through the coming days, thanks to the wisdom of Brené Brown. Those questions are:

- What is the best possible outcome?
- What lesson can I learn?

- What is my best intention?

These questions are truly brilliant. I am hopeful the small actions of good faith by each of us will ripple outward to make our world a better place. To that end, I offer three suggestions for you to consider:

**Look each person you meet in the eye**

This suggestion is easy. I shall quote Maya Angelou. "It's very hard to hate someone if you look them in the eye and recognize them as a human being."

**Listen more than you speak**

When we listen, it is remarkable what we hear. So often, we are in the mode of thinking up a response or trying to be clever. Listening is a skill that requires practice and patience.

Listen with intention and pause before you respond. I have a quote in my planner by Lisa Rubisch that reads, "All you have to be is curious and kind. No one can fault you for that."

**Approach differences with curiosity rather than fear**

Fear is defined as an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain or a threat.

Many suggest that love and trust and hope are the antidotes to fear. I would like to suggest that curiosity is another way to address fear, especially when fear is a result of people and things that are different from what we know. Perhaps, take a look at the three questions above and enter into a conversation to learn more.

I want to thank those of you who have been on the front line getting us through the pandemic and the derecho – the doctors, nurses, paramedics, police, firefighters, contractors, landscapers and countless others. Thank you to the teachers who have kept our students learning and moving forward. May you know how much we are grateful for your heroic efforts. **H**

*Maggie Jackson is a Certified Professional Organizer who dedicates her days to helping others reach their organizing goals by teaching the value of less. You can find her at [organizedlife.us](http://organizedlife.us).*