



New Beginnings for 2011

Each year if you are like the majority of people around the world, you will make New Year's resolutions, because you know that you need to make some changes in your life. Year after year people continue to make the same resolutions, in hopes that this will be the year that they do things differently. I for one have had losing weight at the top of my resolution list for as long as I can remember. According to numerous studies done around the globe the most common resolutions are:

1. Lose Weight/Eat healthier
2. Get in shape
3. Get out of Debt
4. Stop smoking or Drinking
5. Start budgeting
6. Get a new job
7. Save some money
8. Get organized
9. Give more/volunteer more
10. Go back to school



First of all let me say, all of these resolutions are good things. We all need to strive to be healthier and be at our ideal weight. We should eliminate our debt, live within our means on a budget and save more money. You know if smoking and drinking are issues in your life that you need to deal with. We all want to better our circumstances in life by means of a new job or schooling. But are those really the things that we should be resolving to change?

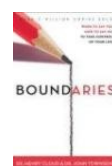
If at the end of 2011 I am still the same weight, I haven't gotten out of debt, I'm still working the same old job will it impact who I am? Am I defined by these external things any more than I am defined by the actions of my ex-spouse, my children, or the courts? Where I live, how much money I make, or whether or not my kids are a part of my life, these are **not** the things that define me. So I guess the real question is what defines me and are there defining areas in my life that need to change?

As I ponder the changes I need to make this next year and who I want to be at the end of 2011, I come face to face with the fact that there are some issues in my life that need work. I'm not talking about the superficial exterior stuff that makes me look good to the world around me. I'm talking about the deep things of my being that need to change. Am I as patient as I should be with those in my life? Do I have a giving heart? Do I have an enabler or co-dependent personality? Do I have addictions in my life that need to be dealt with (including the people pleasing addiction)? Am I able to forgive, or am I angry, bitter and resentful? What in my ex-spouses personality attracted me to them? Am I truly the person I want to be? When it is all said and done these are really the only things that we have the ability to change.

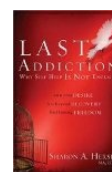
For most of us who have endured Parental Alienation we have been viciously abused by the system, our ex-spouses, our kids, and even friends and family members who don't understand what has happened to us. In our efforts to survive we have isolated ourselves and become victims, or we have only surrounded ourselves with others who have gone through the same thing. There is great comfort in knowing you are not alone but it also keeps you living in the past, reliving the same pain and not moving forward with your life. Now is the time to take inventory and deal with the emotional wounds that we have been dealt. I would like to challenge you to ask yourself the tough questions. For a brief moment take your eyes off your circumstances and people around you and focus on you. Take a good look at your life and make 2011 the year that you resolve to become emotionally healthy. That is the very best gift you can give yourself and your children.

In 1995/1996, I resolved that I would not become a bitter person because of my divorce and the subsequent alienation of my children, I would become better. I would change the things that needed to change and flush that garbage that needed to be flushed. I challenge you to do the same. To the right are some of the books that have been a huge help on my journey to becoming emotionally healthy.

Book Reviews



Boundaries by Henry Cloud and John Townsend is one of the best books I've ever read. Like many of you, I was married to a passive aggressive manipulator who knew how to push my buttons to get what he wanted. For years I didn't even realize I was being manipulated. I had become a classic enabler and I needed to change. For the first time in my life I learned what appropriate boundaries looked like and how to set them. This book was very empowering to me and gave me the confidence I needed to stick up for myself. It is on my top ten best books list. I would highly recommend it to everyone.



The Last Addiction by Sharon Hersh covers all sorts of normal addictions such as alcohol, drugs, gambling, eating disorders, pornography but it goes beyond the norm to discuss addictions like people pleasing. Who knew that people pleasing could be an addiction? As I look back over my life and struggles, I have become more aware of my addiction to people pleasing. Trying to be all things to all people never works out especially if you are married to an alienator personality. This book really helped me see my own life much more clearly.

Others worth mentioning:

Make Anger your Ally - Neil Clark Warren

The Control Trap - Barbara Sullivan

Changes that Heal - Dr. Henry Cloud

Overcoming Emotions that Destroy - Chip Ingram & Dr. Becca Johnson

Go to [suggested reading materials](#) at Keeping Families Connected for a complete list of books to help you deal with your emotions, get rid of the baggage and make 2011 the year you become emotionally healthy.