

New year, new you

2010 was a tough year for many South Africans. Two Lowveld wellness gurus gave **Melanie Reeder** sage advice on ways to get your body and mind back on track for the year ahead.

For many of us, 2010 didn't live up to all its promises of prosperity. Now it's time to "detox your inbox" and look ahead says Nelspruit life and business coach, Melody Tomlinson. The hype and promise of money-making and marketing opportunities thanks to the World Cup left many of us disappointed and deflated once it was all over. Coupled with national strikes and the economic downturn, it was a year most would rather forget. But the reality is that it's hard to forget, and harping on what could have been, can easily become a habit.

"It's tough to be stuck in the past," says Melody, whose years of experience as a coach and a social science degree in economics and industrial psychology from the University of Cape Town, have given her ample experience in matters of personal growth.

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An easy way to make a shift is to see the proverbial silver lining. In other words, identify your disappointments and ask what good has resulted from it. "Perhaps you couldn't afford DStv anymore, but as a result you spent far more time as a family interacting with the kids," she adds.

For some, socialising and going out had to take a back seat in 2010, but if your friends still made allowances and maintained loyal friendships, your financial crisis would have exposed the fake friends for what they really are, adds Melody - yet another positive spin-off of what may have seemed an insurmountable burden.

"We've become self-absorbed and greedy, and this is not a place where joy comes from."

Set a theme for 2011, suggests Melody. Decide what you want this year to be about and stick to that. For example, choose between things like: this will be a year of

abundance, breakthroughs, letting go, finding love, or growing your confidence, and then make a vision board of your goals using images that you aspire towards. "After all, we create our future through our thoughts," she adds.

Add a bucket list of things you want to achieve before your time is up (see page 18 where two top businesswomen share their bucket lists).

It's important to step out of your comfort zone, but aim for 20 per cent, says Melody. "What this means is, if for example you run on the treadmill every day at gym, but you run at the same pace for the same distance and the same amount of time, you won't get

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any fitter. On the other hand, if you aim to run 20km instead of your usual five, the goal is out of reach. Aiming for 20 per cent extra effort is realistic so take baby steps."

Melody also suggests empowering yourself by doing something you thought you could never do. It doesn't have to be something worthy of newspaper headlines, but it can be a small personal challenge like learning to play a musical instrument or registering for a degree.

"Hang out with positive people," adds Melody. It's important to have a support circle that will ensure accountability for your actions. If you join the gym, go with friends so that if you miss a session, you have people to answer to instead of just yourself. "This is a person that doesn't just let you off the hook but expects great results and believes in you."

Don't forget to praise yourself for making it through a tough time. Many people didn't make it, so if you still have a roof over your head and a car, you did well.



Melody Tomlinson

Detoxing is important too, since it stimulates rapid change in your life. It could be as simple as cutting out coffee or alcohol, or even not swearing, or cleaning out your cupboards. The point is to instigate change, and Melody is adamant that committing to anything for a long period of time is a powerful action. "It tells your body you are in control and hence can shift things like procrastination," and if you have a programme to follow, like an eating plan or a diary entry even when you feel weak, strong guidelines will help.

It's all a part of mentally preparing yourself for 2011, and, adds Melody, it's useful to keep in mind the mantra of "thought, commitment, action."

Reducing food to liquid may seem as if you're taking all the fun out of eating, but the art of juicing has its own way of delighting taste buds, and is an incredible way to kick-start your health or change bad eating habits, says Shameen Yacoob, a Nelspruit kundalini yoga teacher who has spent the past few years studying yoga and detox since leaving her high-pressure job as a television show producer. Shameen was also an anti-apartheid activist, and Wits Business School graduate with a solid finance background, but after flitting between her family in Nelspruit and her frantic Joburg lifestyle, she finally made the move back to the Lowveld for good and started exploring her interest in wellness.

There is a definite shift in global consciousness towards the quest for wellness, and a large part of this movement is the trend of juicing and detox, which has stirred up some controversy.

Scientists and the medical fraternity do not advocate detox diets, arguing that our body naturally detoxes itself via organs like the liver and kidneys. But it's tough to ignore all the anecdotal evidence - some swear by the occasional juice fast, claiming that juicing can change your life.

"By juicing we ingest essential nutrients and enzymes without expending too much digestive energy. In addition, there are also enzymes trapped deep inside the fibres of fresh veg that we can't absorb through normal digestion but can easily be released by a juicer," says Shameen.

In a recent *New York Times* article, journalist and detox cynic Judith Newman gave juicing a bash. She notes that the Hebrew word for fasting is *tsum*, which roughly translates as "to afflict the soul" - not the most comforting thought for a first-timer. However, the story does have a happy ending as she realises, "The appetites that ruled me every single day were, for once, my slaves. By the third day I wasn't craving anything. I was free."

"You should fast when you need to make a shift in your life," adds Shameen.

Fresh from a corporate wellness weekend at Boondocks Mountain Lodge with a Nelspruit-based engineering firm, Shameen is buoyed by the positive response she received from the group and is happily blitzing up her first juices of the day while we chat. It's a fragrant blend of celery, cucumber, green apple, broccoli, lime juice, and a dash of heat from a stick of ginger root. While her blender finishes off the earthy green concoction, Shameen mentions that "Green juices are pure organic hydration and oxygenation. Of all the

vegetables, green veg provide the richest source of prana (life force) as well as valuable nutrients to the body like Vitamin A, phytochemicals and carotenoids."

"I'm hesitant to taste, but it's delicious, and my mouth is instantly alive with flavour. I feel healthier already.

"The human body is designed to heal itself and usually does an excellent job of filtering out most toxins so they don't cause disease or illness," says Shameen. "But the body is under constant assault from harsh toxins and chemicals in the food we eat, the air we breathe and the prescription pills and over-the-counter drugs we take.

"By detoxing we are rebuilding and strengthening detoxifying organs, which should then help gain more energy, clear skin, improve digestion and strengthen the immune system."

This all sounds amazing, but is the proof in the liquid pudding?

"Fresh juices contain vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that cleanse the immune system and rid the body of toxins," she adds, but Shameen doesn't recommend this as a prolonged exercise. "Three days can be effective for breaking binges, cravings and other bad eating habits, and seven days is recommended."

If you keep it up for too long, juicing as a lifestyle is not sustainable as it's "too low in calories, B-vitamins and fat."

The cleansing experience is different for everyone, but listen to your body. "The way in which you manifest the results of cleansing will vary with each cleanse you practise," adds Shameen. "I'm not quite sure what she means yet, but my ears do prick up when she says, "in the first few days of your detox, you may feel worse before you feel better," so there is light at the end of the tunnel. Bottoms up!

***Consult a health practitioner before you undertake any kind of eating plan.**



Yoga teacher and juicing fundi Shameen Yacoob.

Detox library

- *Seven day total cleanse* by Mary Macguire-Wien
- *The raw food detox diet* by Natalia Rose
- *The Holford nine-day liver detox* by Patrick Holford and Fiona McDonald Joyce
- *Foods for health and healing* by Yogi Bhanjan.