

Don't tell me I can't...

...stick to my New Year's RESOLUTION!



Forever organising other people, Delia Lloyd made a vow to allow herself more 'me time' – and she was determined to keep it up for an entire year...

It's a complaint you hear so often, it's become a cliché: women do so much for other people –

husbands, colleagues, kids – that they don't make time for themselves.

'I need a wife!' my best friend exclaimed to me over the phone recently. 'The only space that's 'mine' is when I'm driving in the car to work!'

I knew exactly what she meant. For a long time, I was one of those women.

Ironically, the weekends were the worst. Saturday would arrive and while there was nothing I craved more than a bit of time alone, instead I'd find myself answering emails, folding laundry, picking up my husband's contact lenses and racing between dropping my daughter, Allie, seven, at ballet and my son, Isaac, 10, at football practice. Before I knew it, I was more exhausted on Saturday afternoon than I was on Friday night after a week at work!

On 1 January 2010, I was grabbing a coffee (because, honestly, how would any of this happen without coffee?) when I realised that in my never-ending quest to get on top of my to-do list, things that brought me happiness had fallen by the wayside.

So I vowed right then and there to make a change. It was New Year's Day, after all, what better time for making resolutions? For the next month, I'd experiment with assigning myself only two jobs on Saturday – going to yoga and reading the newspaper. I could – and did – do plenty of other things, but those two things would be my 'job' and anything

else I achieved would be a bonus. If all went well, I'd commit to making Saturday a day for 'me time' for the entire year.

Of course, when I told my friends about this plan, they laughed knowingly. 'I swore I'd lose 5lb last year,' one chided, grabbing the ample flesh around her middle. 'Good luck to you!'

Because I knew that it would feel weird to prioritise myself, I marched down to the yoga studio that very first Saturday morning and immediately signed myself up for 10 classes. How better to force myself to commit to this new resolution than paying for it? And once I did that, going to yoga became not just pleasurable, but automatic. Now it's part of my

(new and improved!)

Saturday routine.

Before, when I was standing in line to buy groceries or riding the bus to the football pitch, I'd be

furiously checking emails and texting people to arrange playdates. Not any more. Now I put the phone on silent and pull out the paper or dive into a novel.

I also started reconnecting with friends. Now that I've given myself leave not to use spare time on Saturday to pay bills, I can usually find 30 minutes somewhere in the day to call an old friend. And though I've never been much of a domestic goddess, once I stopped feeling like I ought to be doing something else, I found that making a nice dinner for some grown-up friends was not only something I could be good at, it was also relaxing!

It might sound like I waved goodbye to family time, but far from it. Instead, as I committed to my new goals, other things fell into line. I could sit down and focus on

the children without feeling the need to simultaneously do the dishes. Soon, board games, mini table tennis, chemistry sets all started to come out of the cupboard.

Taking Saturdays off has also helped my productivity. Now that I think about Saturdays as a chance to recharge those proverbial batteries, when I do sit down on Sunday morning to tackle my cluttered to-do list, I actually have more energy.

I'm not saying it's easy. Not a Saturday goes by when I'm not tempted to skip yoga and throw in a load of laundry instead. But I'm proud to say I've stuck to my guns and my goals and proved everyone wrong. This year there's no need to make a new resolution; 'me time' is here to stay. ☺

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'IT FELT WEIRD TO PRIORITISE MYSELF...'

Yes you can BUT REMEMBER...

* **You'll need an incentive:** Whatever the resolution, by the end of January a third of us will have given up on them. Keep yourself motivated by rewarding yourself for every month you last.

* **Expect slip-ups:** Before you embark on any resolution, think of what could go wrong and how you'd react. This will stop you overreacting and ditching the resolution forever after your first lapse.

* **Ask for help:** By nature, we're reluctant to let others down. So, whether it's asking a friend to walk to work with you each week or getting one to keep your credit cards with instructions only to let you use them in certain circumstances, resolutions are better achieved with teamwork.