

In this week's episode, I encouraged you to ask four questions to help you gain a better sense of where you'd like your life and work to go in the new year:

1. WHAT DO I WANT TO EXPERIENCE?

(How do you want to feel? What types of settings do you want to find yourself in?)

2. WHAT DO I WANT TO LEARN?

(What subjects do you want to explore? What areas of curiosity will you dive into?)

3. WHERE DO I WANT TO GO?

(What places would you like to travel? What kinds of location-centric experiences would you like to have?)

4. HOW DO I WANT TO CHANGE?

(How will you be different when you go through this exercise again in twelve months?)

## EPISODE TRANSCRIPT:

It's the start of a new year, and of course that means that many people are beginning to think about where they'd like their life and work to go over the coming months. It's easy to use this season to set big goals and make big plans, but I often find that even my best plans are thrown by unexpected opportunities and obstacles. Yes, it's important to have objectives and a strategy for executing them, but I want to challenge you to consider a roundabout way of getting to them. Instead of simply writing a list of goals, begin with a set of questions that might help you think about the upcoming year in a new way.

On today's podcast, I want to share with you four questions that I ask myself each year that help me gain clarity about where I'd like my next handful of months to go. This episode will skew a little more personal than many, but these same questions can apply to your work life as well. However, I'd encourage you to step back and consider your life as a whole using these questions as a framework before jumping to goal-setting or the making of resolutions.

When you consider your goals for the upcoming year, it's tempting build on where you already are instead of considering alternatives that aren't even yet in view. This means that you might slip into incrementalism at the expense of breakthrough. There is nothing wrong with incrementalism, unless it causes you to overlook ambitions that you aren't even aware of because you weren't paying attention to them. So, these four questions will help you consider ambitions that you might have but haven't listened to in a while because they simply seemed impractical.

Full disclaimer: I'm not certain where these questions came from, and it's entirely possible that I lifted them from someone else. My first record of them is in old journals, so if this framework is from someone else, my apologies. Please let me know and I'll give you full credit. In the meantime, here are the four questions to ask yourself going into the new year:

What do I want to experience?

Consider the kinds of experiences that you'd like to have this year. How do you want to feel? What types of settings do you want to find yourself in?

For example, in 2016 one of my responses to this question was that I wanted to feel useful more often. I find that I'm very motivated when I can serve a specific need that helps others in the moment. (I often experience this when I'm speaking at a conference, but I wanted to experience it on a more regular basis in my daily life, not just at the 40 or so talks I give a year.) As a result, I sought out ways of getting directly involved in my local community, of taking on new tasks that gave me an immediate sense of being helpful, and of creating things that served other people. It's been a great year for me in terms of the experience of "being helpful".

So what is this for you? What kinds of experiences do you want to have? Do you want to experience more presence throughout your day? Do you want to experience mastery of some skill? What does this look like for you?

Where do I want to go?

This one is a little more tactile. Where would you like to go in the new year? I'm fortunate in that I get to travel all over to dozens of cities each year, but even with that I often don't get to truly experience the places I visit. I'm often from plane to hotel to venue to airport to home in a matter of hours. In 2016 I decided that I wanted to more regularly experience the places I visited, so I planned a little extra time around my core responsibilities to enable that. I was able to check off many of my ambitions (be on a mountain, go to the desert, go to Nashville with my wife for our anniversary, spend time in the ocean, go out into the woods more often) because I was more intentional about experiencing these things.

So, where do you want to go in the new year? What places would you like to travel? What kinds of experiences would you like to have? Your answers might surprise you.

What do I want to learn?

Take some time to consider the kinds of new insights you want to have in the new year. What subjects do you want to explore? What areas of curiosity have you placed on the back burner so that you could get around to more practical things?

In 2016, one of my answers was "how to meditate well and consistently". While I'm not always as consistent as I'd like, intentional meditation became one of my core practices in 2016 and it has made a huge difference in my emotional engagement and my ability to handle stress without discounting it. (When I feel stressed, my natural tendency is to dismiss it or ignore it and just push through rather than allowing myself to feel it and deal with it.)

So, what topics will you pursue in the new year? How will you stoke and satisfy your curiosity?

How do I want to change?

This final question is really key, because I believe it is the best measure of success or failure. How do you want to be different at the end of this new year? What kinds of transformations will you go through? What will mark your change of behavior and attitude?

In 2016, I had a handful of answers to this. I wrote that I wanted to learn to be more playful and less intense. (This is something that used to be more descriptive of my

demeanor, but I find that I've lost touch with my playfulness over the years and I've become much more intense and demanding of myself and others.) I also wrote that I wanted to learn to be more "here and now" and less "then and there". Because of my natural tendency to look for patterns and ideas, I often find my mind drifting off and I struggle to be present. That was something I wanted to change in 2016, and in large part I think I did.

So, how will you change in the upcoming year? How will you be different when you go through this exercise again in twelve months?

Again, if you'd like a worksheet to help you do this exercise, just visit [AccidentalCreative.com/newyear](http://AccidentalCreative.com/newyear). I encourage you to set aside a few hours for this exercise so that you can give it the kind of attention it deserves. The funny thing is, by simply writing these answers down I created a kind of accountability for myself. Most of the things I wrote last year actually happened, and I'm not convinced they would have without the specific and intentional process of recording them.

Set aside time to consider these four questions and where your life will take you in the new year. You're going to be a different person this time next year, whether you're intentional about it or not. Make sure that the person you're becoming is a person that you intended to become.