



# RENEWNEWS

*RENEW helps people who juggle work, family and  
Community commitments sustain (or regain) their  
enthusiasm, effectiveness and purpose*



VOLUME XXVII ISSUE TWO

WINTER 2021

## Letting Go

Linda Hawes Clever, MD, MACP

My college Psychology professor's thunderbolt has stayed with me: **"Let go of expectations. They can't be right because they haven't happened yet."** The inescapable logic has simplified my life and softened some disappointments.

Letting go, however, isn't easy. Starting with "What should I let go?" through "Why don't I let go?" and "How do I let go?" we face uphill. Letting go takes guts and patience while we maintain a firm grip on our values.

For starters, consider this "Let Go List": **Criticizing yourself. Criticizing others. Blaming yourself. Blaming others.** What good does all that do, anyway? **Ruminating on the past. Rumors. Grudges**, because, as theologian Lewis Smedes said, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free, and to discover the prisoner was you." (Forgive *yourself* while you're at it. You did the best you could.) **Perfection. Worry**, which is like a rocking chair – it keeps you busy yet it doesn't get you anywhere.

If your fingernails are getting frayed, hanging on, give some thought to WHY you don't let go, WHY you hang on to habits, schedules, committees, jobs, even relationships that distract you from living the life you seek. You may feel obligated or afraid of change. You may want to avoid confrontation. You may be in the shadow of *others'* expectations. You may want to do it all, or you don't want to be left out or shut out. You may wrongly think that letting go is giving up.

The question then becomes *how to let go*? If you identify what fills you up – what fulfills you – you can more easily decide which obstacles to jettison. You could also redefine "failure" and think instead of "learning" or "experiment." You could develop attractive alternatives such as new opportunities and better health. Renew's prescription can come in handy: Awareness → Reflection → Conversation → Plan & Act. Notice and pay attention to your own wise, soft voice. Involve others you trust. It can be quite an effort to let go and change direction, so keep in shape, body and soul.

How will you know if you have reached your goal? Check in with and trust your sweet, valuable, wise self. Compare your frowns and sighs with the levels before you let go. Measure your energy and health. Feel your calm, peace, meaning and joy.

Psychologist Janet Meiselman introduced me to poet Danna Faulds who summarized:

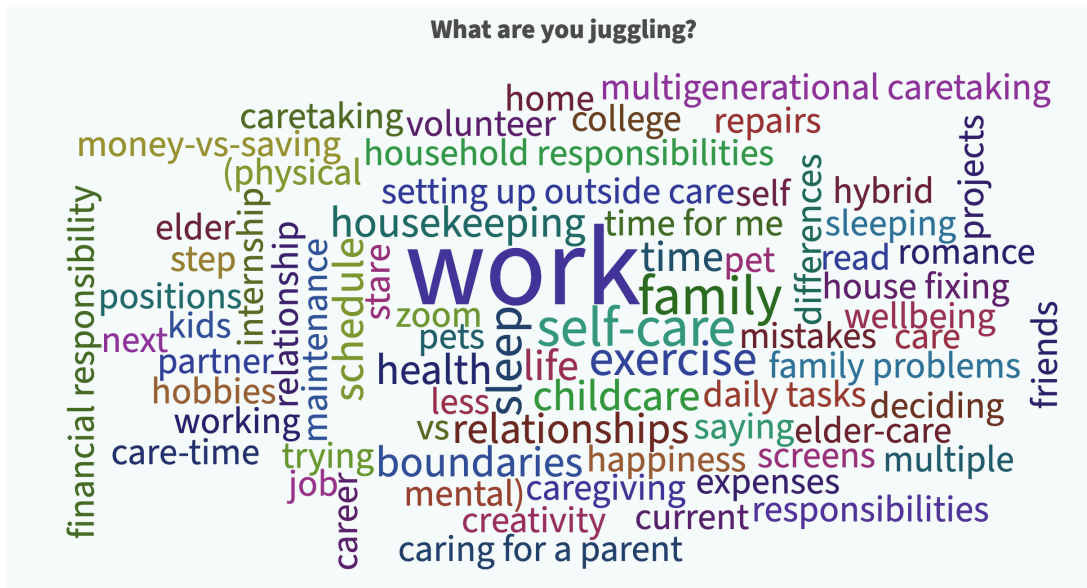
*In the choice to let go of your  
known way of being, the whole  
world is revealed to your new eyes.*

That in itself is a reason to let go.

## INSIDE RENEW

"I just want to be better than busy!" Some groups, like the nurse who commented in behalf of her colleagues, want to figure out how best to spend their precious and limited personal and professional time. Some groups engage RENEW because they want time to reflect. Some need healing. Some want to explore. Some want day(s)-long dives into effective and sustainable leadership. (Many not-for-profit executives in Silicon Valley have tenures in office of 1 1/2 to 3 years. These short periods lead to disappointments and impaired progress, so there is a premium on preparing capable, persuasive leaders.) RENEW responds to the variety of requests with tailor-made programs. This past year, we presented, for example, "Coping with COVID and More", "Sustaining Yourself in Leadership and Life--During Rough Times", "Learning about Yourself, New Skills and Teamwork" and, not surprisingly, "Be Better Than Busy."

*What do people say as they RENEW?* For one thing, they tell the truth (that's one of our rules), share perspectives and ideas--and they find that they are not alone. They can see from word clouds--see below: the more "votes", the bigger the word--that they juggle **WORK** above all with **family**, **caretaking** (kids and elders), *self-care*, boundaries, relationships, money, chores, volunteering, differences, and about 8 more headings. When asked what they are thankful for, it's not uncommon for **dogs** to be mentioned--and "walking the dog" is one of the top choices for inserting pauses (not paws) into a hectic day



## LOOKING AHEAD

Linda will convene a 4-class course for Stanford's Healthy Living Program in February-March, 2022. The course is up now <https://healthyliving.stanford.edu/classes/register/hipClasses.php?t=1cce34dfd3cbss383d348a508b1be48cc821&cc=pfl-40> Community members may sign up. It will be called ***Prescription for a Fulfilling Life***. People will explore their own principles, identify barriers, establish boundaries, and join in the inspiration and mutual encouragement that classmates offer. We will identify **COMPETING** values, ways to maintain good relationships, and remedies for procrastination. Importantly, there will be time to think, even between classes.

## IT IS ALWAYS NICE...

To hear comments after a program, such as this from a physician, "Refreshing. Makes me feel there is hope..."