



# RENEWNEWS

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



VOLUME XXXIX ISSUE TWO

WINTER 2022

## Finding a Way

Linda Hawes Clever, MD, MACP

We – most, if not all of us – are in a “fix”.

When they were young, my husband and his three brothers would call a place with no clear path to victory (say, playing Monopoly) nor a clear way to escape (say, playing “Marco Polo” in a swimming pool), a “fix.” Our current situations, whether about disease, climate, politics, or economics nicely fit their definition of a “fix.”

We are bobbing around and being battered by a sea of problems and uncertainties. We are entangled in swirls of quandary and void.

Humans can do very well in emergencies. We can be fast and effective. We can fight or flee. Many of us do not do well with uncertainty, however. We prefer predictability. We like to plan – and want some assurance that our plans will come to fruition. Ambiguity upsets cherished systems on which we have relied.

Being part of history unfolding is not easy. It took generations for some of the consequences of the Black Plague of the 14th century to become clear. No one in 1346 dreamed, for example, that the most fatal pandemic in human history would lay the foundation of the middle class. Yet so few peasants were available to harvest, that they were paid handsomely and many used the windfall to enter trades and professions. Now, we in 2022 cannot imagine the outcomes of multiple assaults on our lives and lifestyles.

May I offer two anchors on which we can rely, one fundamental and one practical?

The fundamental one: At times such as these, we need to know our values. Our basic principles define us and form the basis of our judgments about good and bad, right and wrong. Our values are anchors lest we wander, lest we get swept like a leaf in a downpour. When we live our values, we gain meaning, joy and strength. A recent Conversation Group© offered some values including: • tell the truth • be kind • don't hurt • respect differences • seek diversity • keep learning. Reviewing and committing to your top few values give you stability and help you find secure harbor so you can chart your course and find a way forward in unsettled waters.

Jesse Mahoney, MD, pediatrician and career coach, suggests one practical technique to find a way to focus and persevere: choose a word to be a guide for the coming year. You could choose a word for 2023 that helps you concentrate on what or where you would like to be and or how you would like to feel at year-end. Words could be • hope • aware • grow • abundance • calm • purpose • patience.

Looking for a guide through the unnerving, relentless challenges, my word is “peace.” What is your word to find a way out of your “fix”?

## Clearing the Clutter

At last month's Center for Excellence in Nonprofit's Leadership Institute, most chuckled and nodded at the comment that a clean desk is the sign of a sick mind. Piles and jumbles may mean playing hide and seek, wasting time, and being exhausted, however. As psychologist Janet Meiselman says, "Out sight, out of mind; in sight, in mind."



We also discussed "clutter" at the recent San Francisco Marin Medical Society webinar, "Moving Ahead, Even Now". Clutter is so "sticky" that special techniques may be necessary when handling it. Picking your personal best time of the day is important (are you a lark or an owl?), as is starting small. You could take just 2 to 5 minutes to start tackling those lurking books, files, clothes, hats, catcher's mitts, pills, and toys – then decide to keep, toss, donate. You can increase to 30 minutes per de-cluttering session, yet don't get tuckered out and do reward yourself. Other kinds of clutter include grudges, needs to forgive, and negative attitudes. These take more intense time and help, yet jettisoning them helps bring new space for peace, calm, and new understandings. For a quick fix on peace and calm, try this website on jellyfish: Monterey Bay Aquarium jellies: <https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams>



### **In response to many requests, RENEW's Program Manager Elisha Danmeier and I noodled TESTED TIPS FOR HAPPIER HOLIDAYS**

- Give up on perfection. Perfection = pressure
- Do less this year – except get more rest and drink more hot chocolate
- Every one into the pool – prep together; clean up together. Put on some lively music.
- Give back or pay it forward – volunteer time or, for example, donate books to a pre-school that needs them
- Ask people what they want to eat and do – and let them eat and do that!

**PSSSSSSSSST! RENEW'S 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER. STAY TUNED.**