

# Meet the 'goal-den girl'

**A**S ANOTHER new year dawns, many people's thoughts turn to how they might change their lives in 2011.

Whether you want to lose some weight, get a new career, find a new love or lose an old one, a new year seems to bring endless possibilities and potential for change.

But if you tend to find your gym attendance is flagging by February or the job hunt is soon put on the back burner for another year, how do you find the confidence to push forward with changes, big or small?

Based in Sevenoaks, Nikki Owen is a leading expert on confidence and charisma. She runs life-changing seminars at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London and helps people from all walks of life to make the most of their potential.

When it comes to New Year's resolutions, particularly those associated with weight loss, some experts say that January 1 is not the best time to start, due to all the food and alcohol still left over from the festive season.

Some people interpret that as meaning January on the whole is a bad time to begin, but Owen believes that, with a little planning, change can begin at any time of year.

"There is a lot of pressure on people to magically change overnight, from being over-indulgent over Christmas and feeling quite tired and drained, to going on a crash diet the day after New Year's Eve," she said.

## Negative

"I would suggest people put a date in their diary when they will be mentally geared up for starting. If they feel ready and prepared to start on January 1, that's fantastic.

"But if they think it would be easier to start in mid-January, they should put a date in their diary and work towards starting then."

A lack of confidence is often cited as the reason for resolutions failing, particularly when people are striving to do something new such as change career, go back into education or somehow reach beyond their normal everyday experiences.

"Confident people feel fearful too, yet they push through their fear," Owen said.

"Aim to do something every week that scares you, that stretches your comfort zone and gets you used to stretching yourself.

"Pay attention to your inner voice – imagine you are your own life coach. You live with yourself 24/7, so what percentage of your inner chatter is positive or negative?"

"When you feel good you raise your energetic vibrations and naturally attract good stuff back. Imagine yourself as a giant magnet and remember the phrase 'thoughts become things'.

"A great way to do this is to play the 'gratitude game'. Every morning, devote five minutes to acknowledging everything good

**JANE CONNOLLY** speaks to the woman who believes she holds the secret to achieving those New Year's Resolutions



**THINK POSITIVE:** Owen says people should not be fearful of achieving their targets

in your life and give thanks for them."

Owen's other tips for developing confidence include doing a good deed every day, as being kind produces the feel-good chemical oxytocin and studies have shown that being nice to people can make you 25 per cent happier.

Compiling a list of your favourite upbeat songs to listen to when you feel down and creating your own mantra to give you a lift or make you laugh can also help to boost confidence.

By making a list of fun things you have always wanted to do and doing them, you can enjoy the double benefits of having a great

time and achieving your goals, which always feels good.

When it comes to setting goals for 2011, identifying what you want to achieve and when you want to achieve it by is the first step to change.

"Imagine the moment when you have achieved your goal – how will you feel, what will you see, what will you hear?" Owen said.

"According to an expert at the University of Western Ontario, our brains cannot tell the difference between something real and something imaginary. That's why visualisation is so powerful when helping athletes

## Nikki Owen's 5 Steps to Achieving Any Goal

- 1) Identify your goal
- 2) Take action
- 3) Notice if your actions are working
- 4) If they are not working, change your actions, not your goal. "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."
- 5) Aim to feel at your best as much as possible, as this conditions your mind to feel more successful.

with motivation and learning a new skill.

"Spend five minutes every day imagining achieving your goal. Create a 'vision board' by cutting out pictures and images of what you want and displaying these in a prominent position.

"If it's an amount of money you want to earn, make up a fake cheque for this amount and stick it on your bedroom ceiling, so it's the first thing you see every morning."

## Everyday

Owen believes that giving up on goals at the first attempt, setting too many targets, not really wanting to change, choosing unrealistic ambitions or things we don't really want can all contribute to failure.

Positive thinking is also the key to making changes for the better.

"There is a book called Complaint Free World and the author advocates putting an elastic band on your wrist, then every time you moan, you switch the band to the other wrist," she said.

"You catch yourself moaning and when you first start, you'll do it all the time. It's very easy to moan about everything. When you first go to the gym, it's really hard work and you wonder if there is any reason to do it. But the more you do it, the easier it becomes.

"It's the same with positive thinking. You are not used to it at first, but the more you do it, the more it becomes part of everyday life."

Nikki Owen has launched a CD which she claims, if listened to on a regular basis, will naturally stimulate the flow of charisma and confidence. Find out more at [www.audience-withcharisma.com](http://www.audience-withcharisma.com).

## Practical approach will help our community

EACH new year gives us the chance to reflect on what has passed, and identify opportunities for the future.

Some of the simplest ideas are the best; lose some weight, be nice to people, remember things that you have enjoyed, and if you can do them again.

When I got to this part I remembered a Baz Luhrmann track I occasionally dig out of the archive which was based on a New York Times article and offers much sage advice.

If you want to take a moment to listen to Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen) before reading on, or while reading, then please do so.

My favourite lyrics are: "Accept certain inalienable truths; prices will rise, politicians will philander, you too will get old, and when you do you'll fantasise that when you were young prices were reasonable, politicians were noble and children respected their elders.

"Respect your elders."

## Forthcoming

Given the financial challenges that many of us will be facing in the coming year these lyrics are as appropriate today as they were then.

No-one knows what the future holds, but we can influence it through the

choices we make and how we behave towards one another.

As part of the Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership I know that times will be hard for the next year or two, but as we already get less funding than many other areas I believe we will be better equipped to face the hardships ahead.

Difficult times bring about new ways of working, prioritising what is important and deciding what is essential – and as we know, necessity is the mother of invention.

As part of the Tunbridge Wells neighbourhood policing team I have some new

staff arriving in the new year to replace people who have moved on to other roles.

Serving our local communities is a privilege for us and we will continue to seek your views and feedback, news and results, using a variety of media.

Tunbridge Wells is blessed with having a wide range of statutory and voluntary groups working with and for the community, and in the forthcoming year they are likely to need any help you can offer.

As my mum often says to me: "A little help is worth a lot of pity."

If you can do something practical for your community, please do so. Wishing you all a fruitful and happy new year.

