



**December 2012**

Holiday Bill of Rights

Frolicking Goats

Changing Habits

Only One Resolution

**Free Workshops**

at Crazy Wisdom Bookstore  
114 S Main, Ann Arbor

While FREE, please call  
**734.424.2797** or  
[email](#)  
to register

**Everyone Welcome!**

[Our Amazing Brain,  
Neuroscience's New  
Discoveries & the  
Implications for Us](#)

Sun, Jan 13, 2013  
2-4:30pm

In the past 15 years, neuroscience has demonstrated the existence of neurotransmitter circuits in the brain that can be altered and redirected by our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, relationships, and external environment. Research has shown that the brain is a dynamic, connective, and socially seeking organ. Come learn about some of these new developments - mirror neurons, differences in men and women's brains, ways to deal with our reactivity. etc.

[Discover a  
New Way to Love](#)

Sun, Feb 3, 2013  
2-4:30pm

This workshop is an introduction to Imago relationship therapy, which is a unique approach to understanding the challenges and opportunities in committed love relationships. It will help you:

**\* discover what's  
beneath your  
longstanding issues  
& what you can do**

531 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 734.424.2797

[website link...](#)

*Happy Holidays! I hope you and your family and friends are enjoying the season. Here are a few suggestions about the upcoming holidays. I've included some information about creating new habits and making only ONE New Year's resolution. Note: The guidelines below are applicable regardless of the holiday you celebrate.*

**Bill of Rights for the Holidays**

**You have the right to take care of yourself: eat right, exercise regularly, and get enough rest.**

**You have the right to have mixed emotions: happy, sad, frustrated, guilty, afraid, grateful.**

**You have the right to have solitude - for planning, thinking, reflection, introspection, prayer, and relaxation.**

**You have the right not to accept some or all of your party invitations.**

**You have a right to ask for help and support from friends, family, your church/synagogue/mosque, and/or your therapist, if you have one.**

**You have the right to give gifts that are within your holiday budget.**

**You have the right to say no to alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, and a second piece of pie.**

**You have the right not to ride with a drunk driver.**

**You have the right to take away the keys of a drunk friend or relative who wants to drive, and to call a taxi.**

**You have the right to smile at harassed salesclerks and angry drivers, and to give them a peace of your mind.**

*Enjoy the Season!*



longstanding issues  
& what you can do  
differently

\* enhance your ability  
to communicate well  
with your partner

\* change your reactive,  
ineffectual behaviors  
into a force  
for compassion, healing,  
& growth

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[Carole's Website](#)

## Habits Are a Strange Phenomenon

There are **good habits** like brushing your teeth, saying please and thank you, being considerate, being grateful, keeping your personal belongings and house picked up, paying your bills, etc. There are **unproductive habits** like dawdling, procrastinating, feeling sorry for yourself, "checking out" with TV, computer, smart phones, surfing the web, excessive use of social media like Facebook, etc. There are **destructive habits** like - overspending living beyond your means, smoking, overeating, using alcohol or any other substance to avoid your own personal issues (shame, fear, anxiety, depression, unhappiness). Even good habits like exercising can become destructive if overdone and not balanced with other parts of your life.

Janet Rae-Dupree in an article in the **New York Times** mentioned that "habits are a funny thing and that we reach for them mindlessly, setting our brains on auto-pilot and relaxing into the unconscious comfort of familiar routine." She goes on to say that brain researchers have discovered that when we consciously develop new habits, we create parallel synaptic pathways, and even entirely new brain cells, that can jump our trains of thought onto new tracks resulting in more creativity and innovation. I'm for this and can imagine that it sounds pretty good to you as well.

Yet sometimes we dismiss ourselves as **unchangeable creatures of habit**, but instead we can direct our own change by **consciously developing new habits**. The latest research is confirming that the more new things we try, the more we step outside our comfort zone, the more inherently creative we become, both in the workplace and in our personal lives.

Rae-Dupre cautions against thinking that you can kill off old habits once those ruts are worn into the hippocampus. You can't kill them off, but you can **consciously** create parallel pathways that can bypass those old ruts. Ask any person who has struggled with an addiction how determined one has to be to recognize the yearning yet choose another path.

Dawna Markova, author of **The Open Mind** suggests that there are three zones of existence: **comfort, stretch, and stress**. She indicates that comfort is the realm of existing habit. Stress occurs when a challenge is so far beyond current experience as to be overwhelming. It's the stretch zone in the middle - activities that feel a bit awkward and unfamiliar - where true change occurs. Getting into the stretch zone is good for us in many ways. It helps keep our brains healthy thereby challenging us to create new pathways that serve to prevent atrophy.

Researchers who asked folks in a study to do something different every day for a period of time - listen to a new radio station, for instance - found that the folks in the study lost and kept off weight, although that was not the intent of the study. No one is sure why this was the case, but scientists speculate that getting out of routines makes us more aware in general. So consider the following for creating some intentional, new habits especially as we approach the time of year where people are encouraged to make New Year's resolutions.

**KAIZEN, a Japanese technique calls for tiny, continuous, improvements** Researchers suggest that whenever we initiate change, even a positive one, we activate fear in our emotional brain. If the fear is big enough, the fight or flight response will go off and we will run or avoid moving forward with whatever new habit we were trying to create. The small steps recommended by the KAIZEN approach don't set off fight or flight alarm, but rather keep us in the thinking brain, where we have access to our creativity and emotional intelligence. With conscious awareness, knowledge, and commitment, alternative pathways can be developed in our brains.

## Make Only One Reasonable Resolution not for a year, but for two weeks or a month

Rather than making several New Year's Resolutions, consider making **ONE resolution** for no more than a month's time period. The shorter time period helps, so the amygdala (the primitive protective part of your brain) doesn't set off an alarm system that scares you into feeling like it's hopeless before you've even finished setting down your intention.

### Practice KAIZEN

- \* Set only **ONE** reasonable resolution for two weeks or one month. By that I mean one that gets you out of your comfort zone, but doesn't put you into the stress mode. (see above)
- \* Write down your resolution. Evaluate whether it is reasonable.
- \* Write down why this particular resolution is important to you.
- \* Write down how you might sabotage your goal.
- \* Every morning repeat your resolve out loud to yourself.
- \* Every evening evaluate your effort, even if not perfect. If you faltered or fell short, recommit.

*\* If the resolution you have chosen puts you in the stress zone mentioned in article above, reconsider and "re-tailor" your goal to make it a reasonable stretch.*

*\* If you get discouraged, reach out to a supportive person.*

*\* If after two weeks or one month, whichever time period you chose, "rev-up," recommit to the same resolution or a slightly more difficult version of the same resolution still for no longer than one month.*

*\* Be patient and encouraging with yourself as new habits take time and effort to "install."*

*\* Keep recommitting for 5 - 6 months until the same resolution or a slightly more difficult version of the same resolution has successfully created some alternate brain pathways.*

*\* Having successfully accomplished one goal, choose another and go through these same steps.*

***You can do it!***