

Little by little

Rather than feeling depressed about all those big things you didn't achieve this year, how about a high-five for the small ones you did, suggests Emma Laurence



NUMBER ONE ON MY 2014

to-do list was to lose five stone (yes, five - not feeling so bad about those extra few pounds now, are you?); number two, to 'make more of an effort' in the mornings (purposely vague - you need at least one you can keep). Number three? Update my iPod. Alisha's

Attic and R Kelly, interspersed with the *Legally Blonde* soundtrack, do not an office-friendly playlist make.

Four and five were non-movers: write a book, and draw more. They'll be back on next year's list, and probably the one after that. But that's fine, I'll get to them. January 1st, like December 25th, is, after all, just another day.

Still, it's hard to ignore the pressure that comes with the dawn of a new year. A pause for reflection reveals that, as suspected, I didn't really manage *any* of the goals I set myself 12 months ago (unless you count sticking on some eyeliner in the lift en route to my desk each morning). And yet I know I will put myself through the same life scrutiny all over again this coming year. Our brains are naturally wired to resolve things: to process, organise and take stock of the information available, create order out of chaos.

In job interviews, we're asked where we see ourselves in five, 10, 20 years' time (a loaded question if ever there was one). Heck, even our dearest friends want to know what The Plan is. If you're single, it's: 'Met anyone nice yet?' Happily coupled? 'When's the wedding?' Married? 'What about kids?' Frankly, it's exhausting.

So what if this year, just for a moment, we put aside The Plan - all the big, important stuff, the so-called milestones - and remember everything else that went into making 2014's section of what my mum would call 'life's rich tapestry'.

Did watching Grayson Perry's *Who Are You?* leave you feeling introspective long after it had finished? Or did you get fed up looking at that wobbly shelf/dripping tap/grubby bathroom grouting and just fix it yourself? Maybe you bought a spiralizer and made courgetti? Played career cheerleader to your teenage niece? Or finally took the plunge and signed up to Tinder?

Did you join Instagram? Or quit Facebook? Tried taking a #nomakeupsselfie, then chickened out upon seeing what you actually look like on camera sans slap, but donated anyway (#guilty - Beyoncé may well have 'woke up like dis', but I, mere mortal, did not).

Did you have that awkward-but-needed-to-happen conversation with a colleague? Or sign up to a course of Psycle classes, only to burst into tears halfway through

your first one for no apparent reason, never to return again (yep, me again)? Hey, at least we tried.

Perhaps you tapped into your inner Cara and let your eyebrows roam free. Or cut your somewhere-below-the-shoulders hair into a collarbone bob. Maybe you renounced your beloved statement necklaces in favour of bold earrings - or an even bolder ear cuff?

As for me, I baked a cake for the first time (more to the point, it tasted great); switched up my usual black, grey or navy jumper for the occasional hot-pink or neon-orange one; put my trainers on and *walked* home once a week; and finally cleared out my parents' loft (farewell, mouldy old exercise books).

And probably just like you, I also spent my snatched commuter minutes racing to get to the end of *Gone Girl* before it reached the cinema. Not to mention the hours singing along to Pharrell's *Happy*, before deciding I never want to hear it ever, ever again (the curse of the overplay). And the evening catching up with an old friend - yes, it'll probably be another two years before we *do* 'do it again sometime'. The point is we did it, and it was wonderful.

This year, along with all the usual suspects (numbers three, four and five, for me), I resolve to big up the incidentals. As Alisha's Attic sang, 'It's just the little things, the incidentals. It's those little sparks that fly and then land like dynamite.'

We are so much more than diets, dating profiles and to-do lists. We're dynamite, when you add up all those tiny, seemingly inconsequential little sparks.

So go ahead, make a plan. Think, hope and dream big. But while you're at it, don't discount the myriad other things, the incidental things, that will go into making you *you* in 2015, just as they have in 2014. Oh, and never compare yourself to Beyoncé. Dat just crazy. 

'We are so much more than diets, dating profiles and to-do lists. We're dynamite'



PHOTOGRAPH GETTY IMAGES