

Paul Flemming: Resolutions work better on others

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Among columnists with a day-after-Christmas deadline, 100 percent were giddily delighted about the arrival of a survey of residents' New Year's resolutions.

TallahasseeVoices' most recent nonscientific Internet survey was released on Thursday. There were 457 responses to the survey. Its results were weighted to match the demographics of residents.

TallahasseeVoices is a public-service project of Kerr & Downs Research.

When asked "What's your New Year's resolution?" more than half said — multiple responses were allowed — exercise more or lose weight. Those two resolutions were the only ones to be mentioned by a majority of respondents.

The rest of the survey is notable, to me, for its contrasts.

More than twice as many respondents said they would resolve to be less critical of themselves (24 percent) than said they'd try to be less critical of others (13 percent). I have no problem thinking everyone was honest about that one.

The third and fourth most-frequent resolutions had to do with money. "Get out of debt" was mentioned by 38 percent of respondents, with "financial" resolutions about saving more money or making more money being mentioned by 34 percent. That's real-world, practical stuff. Comparatively, many fewer of us are worried about our spiritual lives. There were resolutions about religion — going to church more often, exploring a deeper faith — from 16 percent of respondents.

The most interesting comparisons come from answers to different questions. In addition to asking about respondents' own resolutions, TallahasseeVoices also asked "Which of the following News Year's resolutions do you wish your spouse, lover, family member, boss, etc. would make?"

Now we're getting somewhere. Self-assessments are notoriously suspect and generous. My biggest fault? I work too much. I suspect others who know me would come up with a much better, more interesting list of failings.

Same goes, it would seem, for other folks.

Only 8 percent of respondents said they themselves would resolve to quit smoking. However, 16 percent of respondents said they wished someone else would give up the noxious habit.

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