**22. Deep Dive: How to Keep New Year’s Resolutions & The Importance of Sleep**

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:00] If the words New Year's resolution give you that sinking feeling and remind you of past resolutions you haven't exactly kept, let's change the narrative.

**Intro** [00:00:12]

Hello and welcome to ALSO in PINK. The podcast all about lifestyle design. How we live, the clothes we choose and how we organise our space. I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, a certified KonMari consultant and personal stylist. I'm here to guide you on your journey to live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every Tuesday, you'll get new insight on what it means to live well, plus actionable tips.

Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.

A now for a deep dive episode. I like to say ALSO in PINK is the podcast all about lifestyle design. So what does that mean? It's essentially exploring who you are, who you want to be and how you want to live. To help you on your way, these deep dive episodes go all in on a particular topic. I'll highlight a specific aspect of the KonMari method, personal style or lifestyle. And I'm open to suggestions. If there's something you'd particularly like to learn more about, drop me a line.

 **About this episode** [00:01:21]

Today's deep dive episode focuses on new year's resolutions. Should you make them? And how can you keep them? And is there one new year's resolution we should all really make? Okay, so let's be honest. Do the words new year's resolution, give you that sense of excitement and limitless possibility. Or do you have a slightly sinking feeling, more like, Whether you are firmly for or against new year's resolutions, this episode is for you.

And if you've struggled to keep new year's resolutions in the past, you're definitely not alone. Yes, studies have found that only about 8% of us actually follow through and achieve our new year's resolutions. So why is this? Why do so many of us fail when it comes to new year's resolutions? Well, a simple answer is that it's easy to get excited by a big idea. But it's much harder to follow through. It's easy to think. Oh, wow. I want to get fit, meditate every day, eat healthfully, learn a new language, cook delicious food every week. Do all these amazing things.

But wait a second. One step at a time. Forming any new habit takes time, just like physiotherapist Susan Harper-Clark mentions in episode three of this podcast. So it's worth also checking out episode three, if you haven't listened to it already. Okay, so I recently came across kind of a great Russian proverb. It says: if you chase two rabbits, you won't catch either one. Now I'm the first to admit I've never chased one rabbit, let alone two, but this still makes sense to me. It's simple but effective. In other words, focus on one rabbit, focus on one goal, one big idea, one new year's resolution. And this needs to become habit before you bring in any more resolutions. Otherwise, there's a danger that you will chase too many of them and not catch any. So, where do you start? Well, start with the right new year's resolution for you. Not what's right for your sister, your neighbor, your favorite celebrity, but what's right for you.

Take a step back and consider two things. One. Why do I want to make this particular change in my life? And two. Am I just doing this because it's what's expected of me. Am I doing this because Sarah from next door is doing it, or because Mark said it was a good idea?

It's all very well to be inspired by others. But in the end, what really matters is what's right for you. What's right for who you are now and who you want to be. But I get it. That's a pretty big question too. Who are you now? And who do you want to be?

Luckily, I've designed a questionnaire to help with this. You can take my ideal lifestyle vision quiz. It gives you the time and space to imagine.

**Promo** [00:04:48]

Imagine... if you lived the life you really want. You know, your dream life.

Have you ever taken time to picture what it would look like? I mean, what it would really look like?

We're not talking about the life you feel you should have, but, deep down, the life you secretly want. Your ideal life. Maybe you already have a vision.

 You wake up after a good night's sleep on the most comfortable mattress ever. With pillows that support your head just the way you like. You go to your organized closet and choose colorful, unique clothes that fit you and make you feel good. Then pad through a clean, warm, uncluttered home to the kitchen. Your refrigerator offers up the most delicious, healthy options for breakfast. And you have a day of unstructured time stretching ahead of you to do with as you like. But. That's never going to happen, right? Wouldn't it be nice to take a step back, sweep aside all your worries... and imagine...

That's where I come in.

 I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, and I've developed an exclusive questionnaire for the ALSO in PINK community to help you create a vision of your ideal life.

Simply join the ALSO in PINK email list and you'll get instant access to our Ideal Lifestyle Vision Questionnaire. Go on then, make a cup of your favorite tea, or whatever floats your boat... Go to alsoinpink.com and click Start Now. Redefine what's possible & Create your ideal life. Oh, I don't know about you, but having the most comfortable pillow ever is high on my list. Just between us. My current pillow is rubbish. Post pandemic, I'm going out there and testing pillows. I'm going to find a fricking amazing pillow that doesn't give me a stiff neck. A pillow that's so comfortable that I actually say, wow, this pillow is comfortable when my head sinks into it. Okay, I hear you thinking first world problems. But hey, don't diss a good night's rest. Sleep is a kind of superpower, which we'll talk more about in just a moment.

 By the way, the most comfortable night's sleep I've ever had is when I've been traveling in Norway. Literally everywhere in Norway the pillows are amazing. The bedding is so, so cozy. So hyggelig as they say. I remember commenting to one Norwegian woman, how comfortable the pillows and duvets are everywhere I've been in Norway. And she was like, yes, that's something we Norwegians value highly: a cozy sleep. And this falls in line with that whole Nordic hygge thing. So cozy.

So getting back to goals. Yes, I believe it's super important to set the right goals for you. And what's right for you, of course, might not be right for someone else. But if there is one new year's resolution we should all prioritize, I'd say it's improving your sleep. Even if you don't believe in new year's resolutions. Even if you don't think of yourself as particularly goal orientated, I urge you to do this. Consider: how well do you sleep? Do you wake up each day and feel properly refreshed?

I've briefly mentioned before that I'm obsessed with MasterClass. And MasterClass is the online learning platform where you get access to lessons from the world's experts in all sorts of fields. And there's an excellent master class about sleep. The tutor is Matthew Walker. He's a sleep scientist, professor and author. His MasterClass has really brought home to me, how vitally important sleep is and how many of us are not getting the sleep we need. So I'd highly, highly recommend Matthew Walker's MasterClass. And he has several Ted talks to their YouTube videos, articles. So, whatever your budget, you can benefit from his advice.

And he does a wonderful job of breaking down the science of sleep in terms we can all understand.

 So here are Matthew Walker's six tips for better sleep.

Tip number one. Regularity. Go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time every day. Yes, weekdays and weekends. Even if you have a dodgy night of sleep, instead of trying to compensate by sleeping in, you'll actually be much better off if you wake up at your usual time. So going to bed at the same time and getting up at the same time improves both the quantity and the quality of your sleep.

Tip two: temperature. Keep it cool. Your brain and your body need to drop their core temperature in order for you to get to sleep and stay asleep. Aim for a room temperature of about 18 degrees Celsius or 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

Tip three: darkness. Darkness in the evening helps trigger the release of melatonin, a hormone, which helps us feel sleepy. So a good bedtime routine is to stay away from computer screens and mobile devices in that last hour before bed. Dim the lights and do something that helps you relax. Read a book, have a bath.

 Tip four: walk it out. In other words, don't stay awake in bed for long periods of time. And this is where I've been going totally wrong. So instead of lying awake in bed, as I've done, if you can't get to sleep after about 25 minutes, get out of bed and do something different. This is important because your brain is very clever at making connections. So if you spend lots of sleepless time in bed, your brain will learn that your bed is a trigger for wakefulness.

So if you're feeling restless, get out of bed and only return to bed when you're sleepy. Gradually your brain will relearn that your bed is a place of sound and consistent sleep.

Tip five: be aware of the impact of alcohol and caffeine. As a rule of thumb, try to stay away from caffeine in the afternoon and the evening. And try not to go to bed too tipsy. Matthew goes into great detail about the impact of alcohol and caffeine on our sleep.

Even if we don't think something like caffeine affects us, it does. You may be one of those people who has an espresso after dinner and you don't feel like it affects your sleep at all. But in fact it does. Caffeine can decrease the amount of your deep non-rapid eye movement sleep. Yes, but deep restorative sleep. So even if caffeine didn't keep you awake in the night, you probably won't wake up feeling refreshed the next morning.

And finally: tip six. Have a wind down routine. It takes time for your brain to feel ready for sleep. Help yourself out by disengaging from mobile devices an hour before you want to go to sleep. Instead, try to do something relaxing. Find a wind down routine that works for you. And when you've found it, stick to that routine.

But a word of warning. Matthew Walker emphasizes that if you have a sleep disorder, such as insomnia or sleep apnea, these tips won't necessarily help you. So, if you think you do have a sleep disorder, the best piece of advice is to speak with your doctor.

 And full disclosure. In many ways, this is the hardest podcast episode I've put together. Not so much because of the content, but because I'm currently sleep deprived. I've recently had a few rough nights of sleep myself, and am amazed at how this is affected my ability to get things done. My ability to think. Instead of feeling alert and well rested, my brain feels a bit mushy right now. Like I have a bad case of jet lag or something.

Sleep scientist Matthew Walker has made me realize how important it is to embrace your natural circadian rhythm. So that's when, genetically speaking, you're best suited to go to bed and wake up. It's your 24 hour clock. Now I'm a definite warning person. I've always been a morning person.

So in my perfect world, I get up about 6:00 AM and go to bed around 10 or 10:30 PM. Lately though I've not been able to fall asleep until about 1:00 AM and then might get up at about eight.

I normally feel refreshed and full of energy when I wake up early. I'm one of those weird people who's fully alert within about 10 minutes. But recently it's been a real struggle. The later I get up, the worse I feel. And here's where I've been going wrong. Again, according to sleep scientist Matthew Walker, if you have a bad night of sleep, it's best for your body clock if you still get up at your regular time. That goes back to his number one tip: regularity.

So next time you have a dodgy night of sleep. Try getting up at your regular time. Don't try to make up for lost hours like I did. I know it might feel counter-intuitive, but we are creatures of habit and sleep is something too important to mess about with.

 If you're curious to learn more about sleep, check out the resources in the show notes. I've also included a link to a quiz where you can see how much of a morning person or evening person you really are. For long-term health and happiness, it's important to embrace your natural 24 hour clock as much as possible.

So, speaking of embracing who you are and who you want to be, let's get back to some new year's resolutions. Again, if the words new year's resolution give you that sinking feeling and remind you of past resolutions you haven't exactly kept, let's change the narrative.

 Instead of new year's resolutions think personal goals. So, what are your personal goals for 2021? What do you most want to have happen this year? I'm guessing a COVID vaccine is probably high on your list, but let's focus on things you can control. So, what personal goals do you have? Here's some common ones: to read more books, be more active, improve your diet, cook something new each week, stop procrastinating, express yourself more, improve your sleep. And the list goes on and on.

So, what do you want more of in your life this year? Go on, say it out loud. I'll wait for you.

 Okay, that sounds good. So if you're someone who has tried new year's resolutions in the past with perhaps limited success, let me ask you something. Did you have a plan for how to reach your goal? It's one thing having this big, lovely goal. But it's entirely another thing to get there.

The problem comes when we set our amazing lofty goals without any real plan for how to reach them. It's kind of like creating a beautiful product without any real idea of who it's for or how you'll sell it. And in case you're wondering, yes, I have done that.

But I digress. I'll tell you more about my first failed business attempt at being an entrepreneur another time.

So, take time to break down your goal. And allow yourself plenty of time to reach your goal. And of course, make sure it's a goal you really want to achieve. And a goal that's right for you at this moment in time. So, how do you get there?

In business and marketing, there's something called smart goals. All caps. S M A R T. And even if you're not at all interested in business or marketing, you can still learn from this concept. Here's how it works.

S is for specific. Don't leave any room for misinterpretation. Instead of the generic: I want to get fit, try something more specific. Like: I want to be able to run 5k.

M is for measurable. Plan how to track your results. Instead of, oh, I'll run every week. Hold yourself accountable. Use an app or a calendar, or just a piece of paper to track your progress. Schedule in time to run and put a lovely little tick on your calendar. Mark it on your app. Track it. Ah, yes. Today I did this. Hurrah.

A is for achievable. Set a realistic goal, a realistic new year's resolution. So I'm guessing it's not going to be qualify for the Olympics if you've never done much in the way of fitness. Instead. How about: I'll run three times each week?

R is for relevant. Make sure your new year's goal aligns with who you want to be. Something like I'm committed to this new year's goal because I want to feel fit and strong. I want to be in the best shape of my life post-pandemic

T is for time bound. Break your goal down and set deadlines for each stage of the process needed to achieve that goal. So something like: by the end of March, I want to be able to run 5k.

That's why program like couch to 5k is so effective. It's a smart goal in action. And again, a smart goal is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. And the couch to 5k gives you that specific goal. It breaks it down week by week. It holds you accountable. And it's achievable, even for someone like me, who is historically a terrible runner. By the way I'm in week two now of the Couch to 5k. So slowly but surely plugging away. You know that famous Aesop tale about the Tortoise and the Hare? Well, I'm the tortoise. And that's what it takes to achieve a goal. Just keep going. Keep plugging away. Focus on the process, focus on where you are now. And you'll get there in the end. But that doesn't mean you can't celebrate until you've reached that big goal. Celebrate along the way. Each week you make progress towards your big goal, celebrate those little wins. Think of a nice way to treat yourself each step of the way.

If a specific new year's resolution doesn't feel right for you at the moment, here's another idea. Choose a theme for the year. One word or a short phrase to capture what you want 2021 to be for you. A word or theme that represents what you want more of this year. My word for 2021 is IMPACT.

I'm tired of sitting on the sidelines. I want to get out on the pitch and play the game. With this podcast and my new business, I'm putting myself out there. And I hope am starting to make a positive contribution. I hope to make a positive impact on your life and the lives of other listeners. And I hope to live hashtag my best life at the same time.

 Building a business is like running a marathon. And I'm prepared for that. It's a long challenging road before you get anything remotely like a trophy. But it's a road I want to be on. You have to be patient and choose your path well. From past failures, I know it's easy to get distracted and meander. But even a circuitous path helps you figure out who you want to be and what you want to do. And ALSO in PINK is absolutely what I want to do. I want to help you dare to be bold, dare to dream and take a step towards living your best life. So, what do you want? What is your word for 2021? And do you need some help? Help with your new year's resolution or help with your new year's theme. Drop me a line. I want to help you make your resolutions come true this year. Email me: alexandria@alsoinpink.com. And tell me what your goal is for 2021.

What do you want to happen this year? And for the first 10 people who email me, I'll suggest actionable steps you can take to help you reach your goal. And I'll even follow up with you to make sure you're staying on track.

Go on then drop me a line. You have the power to make 2021 a great year.

 Here's to your success and happiness. Well, hope you enjoyed this deep dive episode. Is there a particular topic you'd like to learn more about? Email me alexandria@alsoinpink.com. Or join the ALSO in PINK Facebook group and post about it in the community. I look forward to hearing from you. So here's some key takeaways from the show today.

Remember the big picture is important. Yes, you need to have something inspiring to work towards, but it's all about the process. The magic happens when you take those strategic steps in the right direction. And sleep. Wow. Sleep is so crucial to how well you function on a daily basis.

So how do you improve both the quantity and the quality of your sleep? Go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time every day. If you can't get to sleep after about 25 minutes, get out of bed and do something different. And only return to bed when you feel properly sleepy.

Get to know your personal body clock and embrace the sleep cycle that's best for you. Check out the links in the show notes for more tips on getting a better sleep.

 Here's to making 2021 your best year yet. And having a great year starts today.

**Outro** [00:25:19]

That's our show then. Thank you so much for listening. I'm Alexandria, and this is ALSO in PINK. The podcast, all about lifestyle design. If you enjoyed the show, please subscribe to ALSO in PINK, wherever you get your podcasts. And the absolute best way to show your support is to write a review on Apple Podcasts or iTunes. This really helps more than anything to promote the show. And, of course, tell all your friends. Thank you so much for your support. Until next time, have a wonderful week. Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.