

Better Homes and Gardens®

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Authors of change

These writers dedicated a year to mixing things up. Their goals were big—to help others, to calm down, to try new things—but they succeeded, and you can, too. Here, they tell you how to make it happen.

BY BETH GREENFIELD

Erin McHugh

One Good Deed: 365 Days of Trying to Be Just a Little Bit Better (\$18.95, Abrams Image)

What advice would you give readers looking for the “good deed” life?

First, remember that a good deed is any situation where you can change someone’s life for the better, even if only for a moment—make something a little easier, lighten a load.

The simplest thing is to just give. A shoulder to lean on, time, sound advice, a helping hand, some pocket change—it doesn’t matter what, it just has to be from your heart. (My favorite: Buy two, give one away.)

Finally, never, ever assume it’s too late. When you find yourself hesitating about doing something—thinking “I missed my chance” or “It won’t matter anymore”—just plunge ahead. A sincere good deed is timeless.

Priscilla Warner

Learning to Breathe: My Yearlong Quest to Bring Calm to My Life (\$15, Free Press)

Your search led you to meditation, something you now practice every day. Why did that work for you?

I learned how to ground myself. With meditation, there’s very little time commitment, and you don’t need any equipment—all you need is your breath and a place to sit or lie down. I can meditate in a subway car, an airport lounge, or in bed at night if I’ve forgotten.

Karen Amster-Young

coauthor with Pam Godwin of *The 52 Weeks: Three Drinks, Two Friends, One Year* (June 2013, Skyhorse)

You tried something new every week for a year. How can others start toward a similar goal?

For us, it was about the smallest new thing—cooking something new, remembering to smile. Make a wish list and try to check off one item every week, month, or whatever works for you. Don’t be too hard on yourself if you stumble. Just start again—and remember to have fun. ■

