

The origins of Baby New Year

Excitement for a new year abounds on January 1. Baby New Year is one of the more recognizable symbols of the New Year's holiday, particularly in print advertisements and television commercials. Perhaps you've wondered what role Baby New Year plays in the celebration? While he may seem like a relatively modern icon, this cultural mainstay has a lengthy history.

One theory suggests Baby New Year was celebrated as far back as 600 B.C. in ancient Greece, when a child was paraded around in a basket upon the arrival of the new year. The baby represented rebirth, and Greeks believed their god of wine, Dionysus, was reborn on New Year's as the spirit of fertility. Other historians say that the custom even predates the Greeks to the ancient Egyptians.

Even though the baby new year custom was originally frowned upon by Christians and deemed a pagan tradition, eventually Christians embraced the symbol as well, albeit in a different way. The end of the year is marked by the birth of the Christ child, and this became a special way to

interpret Baby New Year.

In modern times, Baby New Year has lost any connection to a deity or religious figure. Rather, he is now interpreted as a child who arrives at the start of the year and eventually ages into Father Time. The baby is depicted as an infant or toddler wearing a diaper and a sash with the year he is representing (and often a top hat). He is sometimes depicted holding or associated with an hourglass, a noisemaker or other item either pertaining to time or New Year's Day festivities. Father Time is often portrayed as an elderly man with a long, gray beard. The Baby New Year/Father Time message boils down to "out with the old and in with the new." People bid goodbye to Father Time and welcome this cherubic child who will carry them through the next 12 months and grow with them.

The Baby New Year idea eventually developed into a "First Born" tradition as well. Many towns, cities and hos-



pitals have instituted contests awarding the first baby born in the new year the title of "Baby New Year." Such children are often the subjects of local news coverage and get their picture in the newspaper. Gifts, such as complimentary diapers, a case of formula or baby food or other baby supplies may be offered. In addition, private companies may offer their own gifts and recognition to the lucky child and his or her family in turn for complementary publicity.

Baby New Year is a symbol of the fresh start the new year brings. His relevance in celebrations has endured for centuries.

Organize and Declutter Room-by-room

Getting organized is a popular New Year's resolution.

Clutter can be a major source of stress that affects how individuals feel about their spaces. Psychology Today indicates messy homes and work spaces can contribute to feelings of helplessness, anxiety and overwhelming stress. Clutter bombards the mind with excessive stimuli, makes it more difficult to relax and can constantly signal to the brain that work is never done.

Tackling messes no matter where they are lurking is not a one-time project. Much like losing weight and getting healthy, clearing a home of clutter requires dedication and lifestyle changes. With these organizational tips and tricks, anyone can work through their home room-by-room and conquer clutter.

Find a place for everything

Clutter creeps up as people accumulate possessions over the years. Over time, failure to regularly go through belongings and thin the herd can lead to the accumulation of clutter. But clutter also can accumulate if people fail to find a place to put items. Racks for garages, organizational systems for closets and furniture with storage capacity, such as storage ottomans, are some storage solutions that can help



people find a place for their possessions.

Utilize vertical space when possible

Getting items up and off the floor can maximize square footage in a home. Bookshelves, hanging wall shelves, hooks, cabinetry, built-ins, and other storage solutions that rely on walls and ceilings are simple and effective storage solutions. Unused space behind cabinet or closet doors are some additional places to store belongings. Hang razors or toothbrushes on medicine cabinet walls and curling irons and other hair tools on the interior of cabinet doors in

bathrooms.

Create a coding system

Home offices can be some of the more disorganized rooms in a house simply due to the volume of electronics and paperwork within them. HGTV suggests using a color-coded system for important files to keep them organized. Label important items, whether they're paper or digital files, in accordance with your system.

Put it away

When you finish using an item, return it to its storage location. This eliminates piles of belongings strewn around the house — and hunting and pecking for missing things. If you can't put it away immediately, have a few baskets or hand labeled for the different rooms in the house. Pop the items in the requisite baskets and then routinely take each basket around the house to return the items.

Investing in custom cabinetry and organizational systems also can help people organize their belongings. Tackle rooms such as the garage, basements, bedroom closets, and pantries, or those areas that tend to accumulate clutter the fastest.

Limit Your Screen Time

Modern smartphones and tablets are great tools to stay on top of news and events happening in our communities and at a national level.

However, when the screen begins to overtake our daily lives, lessening their use can promote positive benefits. This year resolve to put down your device and enjoy the company in front of you.

"Do Not Disturb" mode will be a valuable resource when limiting your screen time. Especially in settings when you are in the company of others, avoid the urge to checking your phone by turning off its notifications. Many smartphones include options to choose a designated time of day to automatically enter this mode.

Consider using it during dinners or family-board game night to enjoy the wholesome company of your closest loved ones.

Limit Social Media

Do you often find yourself blindly picking up your phone to browse your favorite social media site? You may be unaware that it can have a negative influence on your health and wellness.

According to a recent medical study, Facebook users who avoided the site for just a week showed higher levels of life satisfaction and improved emotional life. While social media outlets provide great access to current events and achievements of your closest friends and family, overuse can cause a type of envy that affects the

relationships with your physical companions.

Involve the Entire Family

If you have children who utilize smart devices, show them the importance of limiting their screen time. Especially for younger kids, managing their access is crucial to instill your expectations as they age. Take advantage of parental-control settings to limit the programs they use and the timeframe it is allowed.

It may be more difficult to limit screen time in older children, especially if their friends are also online. Be vocal about your expecta-

tions on how often they use their device and the content they view.

Have a serious conversation about cyberbullying and how to report it if they become victims. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, nearly 43 percent of kids have been bullied online and one in four has had it happen more than once.

Wishing you a Happy New Year!

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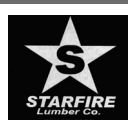
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With gratitude and best wishes for a
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