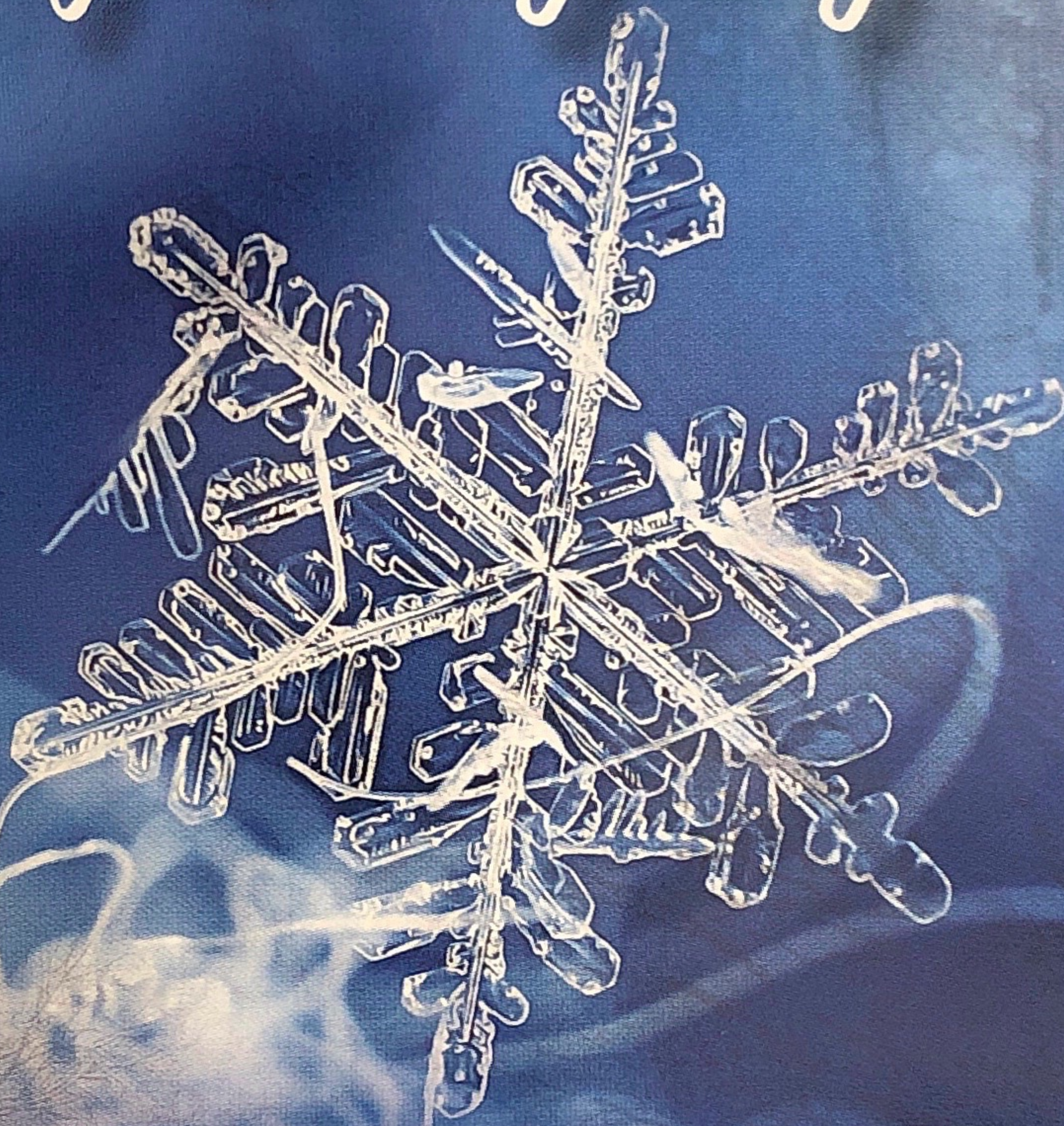


GUIDE FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING

SCIENCE OF MIND®

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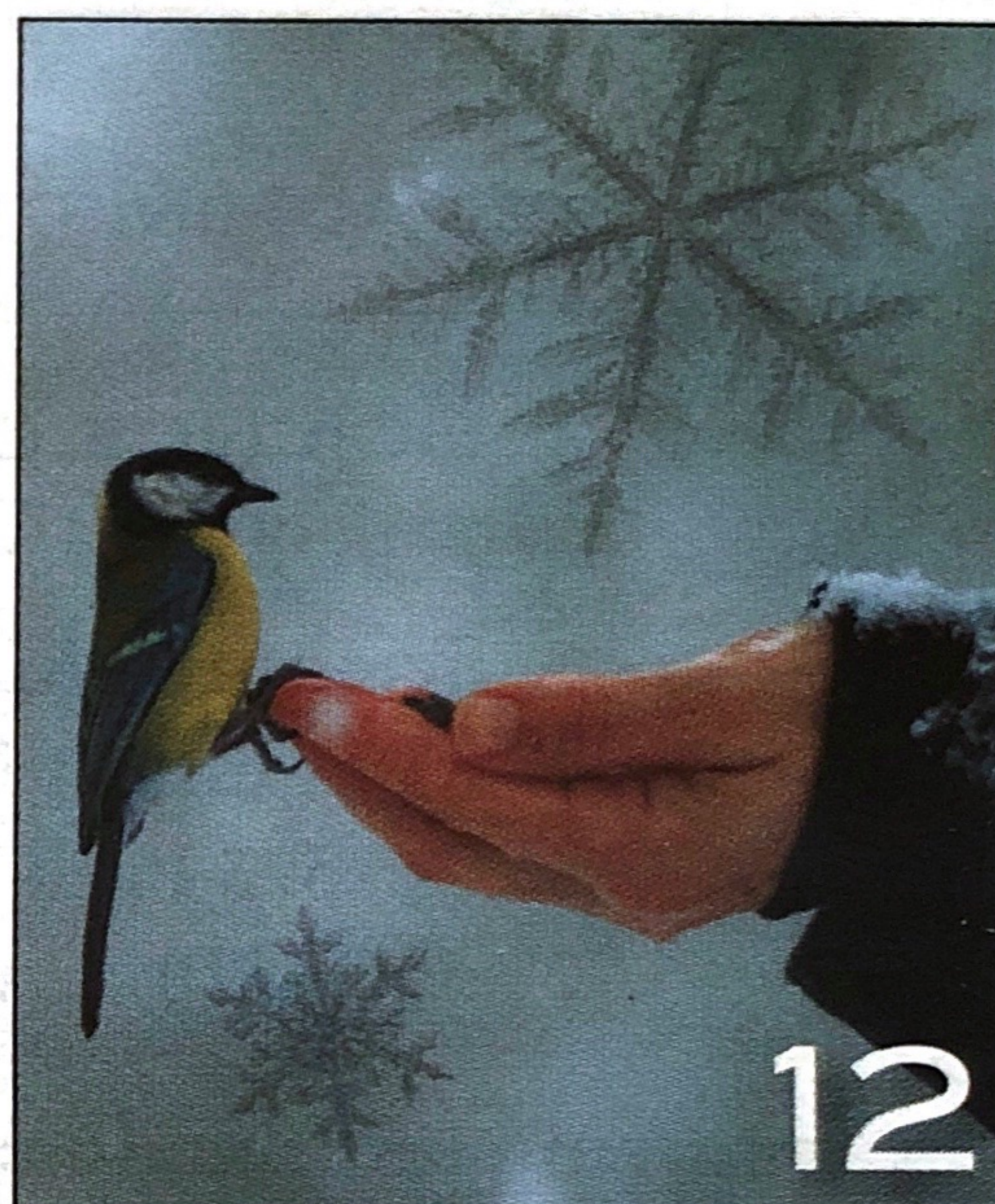
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Living Everyday Wonder

FEEL AND REVEAL THE SACRED ALL AROUND YOU

Immersed in the Divine

Together, we welcome 2022 with a sense of wonder and gratitude. If you haven't stood in awe of the Divine today, get outside the box, go outdoors, stretch forth your arms, look up at the sky and say, "Show me the wonder of this day." Then be still. You just knocked down the walls, blew off the ceiling by opening your mind and heart. An open mind and heart are the doorway to Infinite connection.



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Also in the January 2022 issue ...

**HACKING YOUR HABITS:
WELCOME TO 2022**

**SCOTT "Q" MARCUS
PAGE 18**

**FINDING GOD IN
THE MUNDANE**

**JOHN WATERHOUSE
PAGE 24**

**DAILY GUIDES: NEW
YEAR, FRESH INSIGHTS**

**CHRISTINE GREEN
PAGE 32**

**THE POWER OF
YOUR AFFIRMATIONS**

**MARILYN LEO
PAGE 70**

**YOGA: THE PRACTICE OF
QUIETING THE MIND**

**JULIE MIERAU
PAGE 90**

Hacking Your Habits



UNDERSTANDING HOW HABITS ARE CREATED

by Scott Q Marcus

At 12:01 a.m. on January 2, 2022, if you put your ear to the window and listen carefully, you will hear a giant clunking sound as the national psyche lurches from “Let’s par-tay!” to “Uh-oh, time to get in shape.” Now it’s time to dedicate ourselves to our goals.

We often find it difficult to stay on track during the holiday party season, that period from when Halloween candies hit the store shelves until the last New Year’s party has faded with the final chords of “Auld Lang Syne.” We’ve been around the block a few times. We know how difficult it can be to get back on track in January. We could just stay on course — if we all know what this time of year is like, why do we do this to ourselves year after year?

While the answers are numerous, at the core is habit. To permanently change habits, we need an accurate understanding of what they are. Most people mistakenly consider habits to be *repeated behaviors done without thought developed over time*. That’s partly true, but it misses the focus on more significant elements: everything that *precedes* the behavior. Not understanding the entire chain condemns us to be victims of our actions instead of victors.

A more accurate definition of a habit is a recurring pattern of thoughts and feelings triggering a repeated behavior that all work together to simplify our lives.

We are not mindless zombies, aimlessly wandering the landscape, driven by impulse and instinct, reacting without any control. Instead, we develop patterns that allow us to lower the cacophony between our ears and think less. The benefit is we can simplify our lives by going on autopilot. After all, it’s hard to be constantly engaged. We need relief.

There are three things that create habits.

1. Thoughts: Thoughts are like leaves in a stream — a continual, nonstop flow of observations. Most go unnoticed, yet periodically we pick one up and focus on it. For example, “The pandemic caused me to stay home from holiday parties again this year.”

2. Feelings: As Louise Hay said, “A feeling is a thought that sticks.” Thinking of how isolated I have been and everything I have missed, sadness kicks in, and I might feel angry that I cannot do what I want.

3. Actions: We are hardwired to respond more quickly to emotions than to logic. Over the years, I realized eating something fun diminishes anxieties. So without thinking, I grab the chocolates I bought for the Christmas stockings. The sugary taste and smooth texture take my mind off my anxiety. I feel a temporary relief instead. Therefore, I continue eating, leading possibly to guilt — a cousin of anger — triggering more eating. The habit cycle is complete and continues.

What we say to ourselves determines what we do to ourselves. To effectively and permanently unleash ourselves from the grip of habits, we have to change our self-talk. Instead of reacting without thought, we respond with a different thought.

When the longing for holiday parties arises, I slow myself down, get centered, take a deep breath, relax and think, “What else is true about holiday parties?” I might say, “While I certainly miss them, I am proud of the fact that I take care of myself and those I care about by staying away. By avoiding them this year, I’m making the new year even better.”

We don’t develop habits overnight. We must be patient, compassionate and kind to ourselves while we tread this new path. Avoid beating yourself up for the inevitable setbacks. Remember, if guilt or shame were motivational, we’d all be happier, healthier and more successful. ✎



Scott “Q” Marcus is the author of eight books, as well as a syndicated columnist, coach and award-winning speaker and facilitator. You can reach him by email at ScottQ@ThisTimeIMeanIt.com or at his motivational Facebook group, Intentions Affirmations Manifestations. He will be leading a workshop for Centers for Spiritual

Living, “Hacking Your Habits,” on Thursday evenings, January 6 to 27, 2022, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. MT. Reserve your space and register online at Shop.CSL.org/Product/Hacking-Your-Habits/.