



# Calendar *of* Catalysts



GRETCHEN RUBIN



I'm a big fan of any reminder to stop to consider what changes could make our lives happier, healthier, more productive, and more creative—whether that prompt comes from the New Year, a birthday, Valentine's Day, a significant anniversary, or official "days" like "Earth Day."

Some people (Questioners!) often object to using a date like January 1, because they consider the date arbitrary. It's true, it is arbitrary—and why wait? Now is always the best time to begin.

Some people object to a day like Mother's Day, because they consider it a consumerist holiday celebrated just because it prompts us to buy stuff.

Nevertheless, I do think that external dates can be valuable reminders to reflect. In the tumult of everyday life, it's hard to remember to step back, reflect, and think about what changes we'd like to make.

For that reason, I'm creating a **Calendar of Catalysts**—a menu of dates to use as reminders to stop, evaluate, and plan. I want to offer a range of choices, because different dates will appeal to different people. Reverse the solstices and change the seasons to suit your hemisphere.

## A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE CALENDAR OF CATALYSTS

These dates are valuable as reminders for reflection. For the action of actually starting a new habit, most people prefer to start on a Monday.

The dates aren't spaced out equally, but that's okay, because people will choose the dates that resonate most. For instance,

- ♦ if nature is very important to you, you might want to use the summer solstice as your catalyst, because that natural cycle is appealing

- ♦ if you have a whimsical bent, you might embrace the pun of "March Fourth"
- ♦ if you're business-inclined, using Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 might feel right
- ♦ you might add your unique dates, such as your birthday, your pet's birthday, an important anniversary or milestone

This kind of personal association may be particularly important for **Questioners** and **Rebels**.

- ♦ **Questioners** resist anything that feels arbitrary, and a date like January 1 often feels arbitrary to them. They do better when they pick a date that feels justified—or they may just start right away, which is always an excellent time to start!
- ♦ **Rebels** want to live up to their identity, so might benefit from starting on a date that feels particularly suited to a particular identity

You can adapt the catalysts to your aims. For instance, the first day of spring might inspire you to reflect on the aim of "spring-cleaning" and think about how to create more outer order in your life. For most of us, **outer order contributes to inner calm**.

Each year on the *Happier with Gretchen Rubin* podcast, we discuss the Try-This-at-Home suggestion to "**Design your summer**"—i.e., consider the approaching season and figure out how to design the experience you want. But you can choose the date and season that most appeals to you.

On the day that you've chosen as your catalyst for change, you might also consider adding some **ritual to mark your determination**. Maybe you write down the habit you want to break and burn the paper. Maybe you empty a shelf to hold all books you're going to read, going forward. Maybe you keep your calendar free for the entire morning of your catalyst day, so you can reflect and plan.



Onward,  
**GRETCHEN RUBIN**

# January

1 **New Year's Day**—one of the most popular time to reflect.  
First day of Q1

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DO YOU HAVE A DAY THIS MONTH THAT YOU'VE CHOSEN AS YOUR CATALYST FOR CHANGE?

Yes!       Not for this month.

*If you do, mark it on the calendar.*

IF YOU'VE CHOSEN A DAY, WHAT RITUAL MIGHT YOU ADD TO MARK YOUR DETERMINATION DAY THIS MONTH?

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NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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Have you used other unconventional, whimsical dates for reflection?  
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# March

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4 **March Forth** to new, better habits

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13 **Spring forward**, spring into action, exercise

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20 **First day of spring** and **spring equinox**

21 **3-2-1** is a great day to “blast off” on a project or undertaking you’ve been meaning to start

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24 **National Waffle Day** is a day to make any decision you’re “waffling” about

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## NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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# April

1 First day of Q2  
401(k) retirement plans—think about saving for your retirement

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10 100th day of the year —use this day for a whimsical celebration

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15 Use tax day to think about your finances

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1 **Mayday**—look for ways to ask for help. Also, a day when you “may” do something

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4 **“May the Fourth be with you”** from *Star Wars*—face that big, intimidating challenge or decision

5 **Sensorium Day**—take time to appreciate one or more of your five senses

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23 **1-4-3 Day**, in honor of Fred Rogers, is a day for acts of kindness and neighborliness

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29 **529 savings plans for education**—save for your education or help others save

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## NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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# June

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21 **First day of summer and summer solstice**

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# July

1 First day of Q2

2 Halfway Day— 183rd day of the year, marks the halfway point

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# August

1 **Dogust**—the day to celebrate the birthday of a dog if you don't know the dog's actual birthday

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8 8/8 is a day to evaluate your eating choices, and consider making healthy changes

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21 **First day of winter and winter solstice**

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