

13. Mobile phones made significant inroads in the fight against rabies, a disease which kills more people annually than all terrorists combined.
14. Thailand became the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.
15. Harvard scientists created a new platform for antibiotic discovery that may help solve the crisis of antibiotic resistance.
16. Liberia was officially cleared of Ebola, meaning there are now no known cases of the deadly tropical virus left in West Africa.
17. The number of cigarette smokers in the US dropped by 8.6 million since 2005.
18. World hunger reached its lowest point in 25 years.
19. Ontario announced a \$100 million initiative to curb violence against indigenous women.
20. Myanmar swore in its first elected civilian leader in more than 50 years.
21. In 1990, more than 60% of people in East Asia lived in extreme poverty. As of 2016, that proportion has dropped to 3.5%.
22. Homelessness in the United States declined by 35% since 2007, and Los Angeles committed to \$1.2 billion to help get more people off the street.
23. Taiwan is on the verge of becoming the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage.
24. Gambia and Tanzania banned child marriage, following sustained lobbying by civil society groups.
25. The drive to end female genital mutilation in Africa made a major breakthrough, when the Pan African Parliament endorsed a continent-wide ban.
26. Germany took on rape culture, introducing a law to broaden the definition of sex crimes by zoning in on the issue of consent.
27. The African Union announced a new single African passport that permits holders to enter any of the 54 AU member states without a visa.
28. Italy became the last large Western country to recognize same-sex unions in 2016.
29. Denmark became the first country to no longer define being transgender as a mental illness, and Canada announced a ban on transgender discrimination.
30. 2016 marked the 24th year in a row that teenage pregnancy rates declined in the United Kingdom and the United States.
31. Global carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels did not grow at all in 2016. It's the third year in a row emissions have flatlined.

See more of THE REASONS 2016 WAS A GOOD YEAR:
<http://tinyurl.com/h2s9gjc>

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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY
 Week beginning December 29
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 Grammar key: Asterisks equal *italics**

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): As I was ruminating on your astrological omens for 2017, I came across a wildly relevant passage written by Rabbi Tzvi Freeman. It conveys a message I encourage you to memorize and repeat at least once a day for the next 365 days. Here it is: "Nothing can hold you back -- not your childhood, not the history of a lifetime, not

even the very last moment before now. In a moment you can abandon your past. And once abandoned, you can redefine it. If the past was a ring of futility, let it become a wheel of yearning that drives you forward. If the past was a brick wall, let it become a dam to unleash your power."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Naturalist John Muir regarded nature as his church. For weeks at a time he lived outdoors, communing with the wilderness. Of course he noticed that not many others shared his passion. "Most people are on the world, not in it," he wrote, "having no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them -- undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of polished stone, touching but separate." Is there anything about you that even partially fits that description, Aquarius? If so, I'm pleased to inform you that 2017 will be an excellent year to address the problem. You will have immense potential to become more intimate and tender with all of the component parts of the Great Mystery. What's the opposite of loneliness?

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Seven Chilean poets were frustrated by their fellow citizens' apathy toward the art of poetry. They sarcastically dramatized their chagrin by doing a performance for baboons. Authorities at the Santiago Zoo arranged for the poets' safety, enclosing them in a protective cage within the baboons' habitat. The audience seemed to be entertained, at times listening in rapt silence and at other times shrieking raucously. I'm sure you can empathize with the poets' drastic action, Pisces. How many times have you felt you don't get the appreciation you deserve? But I bet that will change in 2017. You won't have to resort to performing for baboons.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Donatello was a renowned Italian sculptor. His favorite piece was "Lo Zuccone," a marble statue of the Biblical prophet Habakkuk. As Donatello carved his work-in-progress, he addressed it. "Speak, damn you! Talk to me," he was heard to say on more than a few occasions. Did the stone respond? Judging from the beauty of the final product, I'd have to say yes. One art critic testified that "Lo Zuccone" is a "sublimely harrowing" tour de force, a triumph of "forceful expression," and "one of the most important marble sculptures of the 15th century." I suspect you will have Donatello-like powers of conversation in 2017, Aries. If anyone can communicate creatively with stones -- and rivers and trees and animals and spirits and complicated humans, for that matter -- it'll be you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): According to Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami, "A certain type of perfection can only be realized through a limitless accumulation of the imperfect." Let's amend that thought so it's exactly suitable for your use in 2017. Here's the new, Taurus-specific version: "A messy, practical, beautiful type of perfection can be realized through a patient, faithful, dogged accumulation of the imperfect." To live up to the promise of this motto, make damn good use of every partial success.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Gemini gymnast Marisa Dick has created a signature move that has never been used by any other gymnast. To start her routine, she leaps up off a springboard and lands on the balance beam doing a full split. The technical term for this bold maneuver is "a change-leg leap to free-cross split sit," although its informal name is "The Dick Move." The International Federation of Gymnastics has certified it in its Code of Points, so it's official. During the coming months, I expect that you will also produce one-of-a-kind innovations in your own sphere.

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EXPLORING YOUR LONG-RANGE FUTURE

Would you like some inspiration as you muse and wonder about your upcoming adventures in 2017?

In this week's EXPANDED AUDIO HOROSCOPES, I offer you a long-term, in-depth exploration of your destiny in the coming months. This is Part One of a three-part series.

Part Two and Part Three will be available in the next two weeks.

Access them online at <http://RealAstrology.com>. Register and/or sign in.

They are also available by phone at 1-877-873-4888.

The cost is \$6 per sign on the Web (discounts are available for bulk purchases), or \$1.99 per minute by phone.

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CANCER (June 21-July 22): I hope you will be as well-grounded in 2017 as you have ever been -- maybe even since your past life as a farmer. I trust you will go a long way toward mastering the arts of being earthy, practical, and stable. To do this right, however, you should also work on a seemingly paradoxical task: cultivating a vigorous and daring imagination - as perhaps you did in one of your other past lives as an artist. In other words, your ability to succeed in the material world will thrive as you nurture your relationship with fantasy realms -- and vice versa. If you want to be the boss of reality, dream big and wild -- and vice versa.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Even if you don't think of yourself as an artist, you are always working on a major art project: yourself. You may underestimate the creativity you call on as you shape the raw material of your experience into an epic story. Luckily, I'm here to impress upon you the power and the glory of this heroic effort. Is there anything more important? Not for you Leos. And I trust that in 2017 you will take your craftsmanship to the highest level ever. Keep this advice from author Nathan W. Morris in mind: "Edit your life frequently and ruthlessly. It's your masterpiece, after all."

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): French painter Henri Matisse (1869-1954) turned out to be one of the supremely influential artists of the 20th century. But he was still struggling to make a living well into his thirties. The public's apathy toward his work demoralized him. At one point, he visited his dealer to reclaim one of his unsold paintings. It was time to give up on it, he felt, to take it off the market. But when he arrived at the gallery, his dealer informed him that it had finally been bought -- and not by just any art collector, either. Its new owner was Pablo Picasso, an artist whom Matisse revered. I think it's quite possible you will have comparable experiences in 2017, Virgo. Therefore: Don't give up on yourself!

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): "The self in exile remains the self, as a bell unstruck for years is still a bell," writes poet Jane Hirshfield. I suspect that these words are important for you to hear as you prepare for 2017. My sense is that in the past few months, your true self has been making its way back to the heart of life after a time of wandering on the outskirts. Any day now, a long-silent bell will start ringing to herald your full return. Welcome home!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): In accordance with your astrological omens for 2017, I've taken a poem that Shel Silverstein wrote for kids and made it into your horoscope. It'll serve as a light-hearted emblem of a challenging but fun task you should attend to in the coming months. Here it is: "I've never washed my shadow out in all the time I've had it. It was absolutely filthy I supposed, so I peeled it off the wall where it was leaning and stuck it in the washtub with the clothes. I put in soap and bleach and stuff. I let it soak for hours. I wrung it out and hung it out to dry. And whoever would have thunk that it would have gone and shrunk, for now it,Äôs so much littler than I."

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Walk your wisdom walk in 2017, Sagittarius. Excite us with your wisdom songs and gaze out at our broken reality with your wisdom eyes. Play your wisdom tricks and crack your wisdom jokes and erupt with your wisdom cures. The world needs you to be a radiant swarm of lovable, unpredictable wisdom! Your future needs you to conjure up a steady stream of wisdom dreams and wisdom exploits! And please note: You don't have to wait until the wisdom is perfect. You shouldn't worry about whether it's supremely practical. Your job is to trust your wisdom gut, to unleash your wisdom cry, to revel in your wisdom magic.

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Homework: If you'd like to enjoy my books, music, and videos without spending any money, go here: <http://bit.ly/LiberatedGifts>

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3. Tell your company's IT group to let my address pass through any filtering software they have set up.
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P.S. I totally respect your privacy. I'll never sell or give away your address to anyone.

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