

So is it true do you think that the grass is always greener on the other side? No sooner do I land the dream job than I am searching the paper for another one. I move house and then walk round the village wondering what all the other houses are like in case they have a sunnier garden or a bigger kitchen. Maybe my time would be better spent enjoying what I have but something in me keeps on looking for bigger and better.

I've just come back from a few days away, and we had a lovely time; a girls' weekend in a cottage by the sea. We went for long walks, cooked together and sat up all night talking about everything.

Throughout the weekend we all thought how great it would be to live in the cottage we had rented. I was convinced if I lived there and walked on that beach then I would finally be able to finish the novel I've been planning for ever. One of the others was sure that this was where she would meet the man of her dreams, marry and have all the children she knows she wants. We all decided we would eat more healthily, watch less television and generally lead a better life if only this holiday cottage was our home.

But that's not likely is it? I could just as easily sit down at my desk here and write my story. The only thing stopping me is me. None of us will behave any differently just by moving home. If we want to bake bread, learn Spanish or meet new people this can all be done without moving to the other side of the country.

I read a book once by John Bird, the bloke who set up 'The Big Issue'. He talks about his experiences working with the homeless, and describes how people wanting to change are often too ambitious, wanting to transform everything in their lives. They come to him and tell him how they are going to give up smoking and drinking, find themselves a job and a flat and get back in touch with family and old

friends. John tells them to slow down, to try just cutting back on the drink at first, and then maybe think about something else once they have managed that for a while. He talks about setting yourself up for failure by trying to do it all at once.

As we reach the season for over-indulgence followed by resolutions, maybe it is as well to heed John's words. Rather than going on a strict detox diet, running five miles every morning before work and swearing off the drink forever only to abandon it all after one week, why not try just one of them? You are much more likely to make changes if you aim for something realistic that you know you can stick to without feeling constantly deprived. The feeling of martyrdom will soon lose its novelty for us mere mortals.

There was talk on the radio this morning about how they are working with people coming out of prison to help them change their offending behaviour. The theory is that you take them out of their environment, away from the things and the people that influenced them, and magically they will move away from crime and into a life of work and respectability. I sympathise with what they are trying to do, although I do have some doubts about how well it will work. If someone is inclined to behave in a certain way, be it drink and drugs or committing offences, I am sure that they will find a way no matter where they are put.

I hope they are given more than just a place to live far away from their last home. If they don't get help to build a proper support network, with real work and a place to live, it will be all too easy to drift back into the behaviour that got them into trouble in the first place.

Just like me and my novel, making it happen in life is going to require a little bit more than a change of scenery. There has to be a desire for it to happen, a bit of realism of what can be achieved and a whole lot of determination and hard work.