

Living with Intention

“An intention is a statement that springs from deep within us, that expresses a clear declaration of a desired direction.”

An intention is a tool to help bring you into alignment. It is about articulating what is uppermost in your mind and heart. It is an articulation of your priorities, your deepest heart's desire. It is a tool to activate the resources that live within you. And, it is a tool for healing.

Intention is a powerful element of the life force that drives and molds your experience. It is a sacred contract that draws both one's inner life and outer world together. Intention acts on the will and calls for a unique and sometimes subtle dance between one's will power and the ability to surrender. Intention setting is an evolving process, thus an intention can be honed to make it more and more specific as one's life unfolds. Most importantly, living with intention is about harnessing the power of the word.

Some examples of an intention

- My intention is to follow my heart and to manifest peace, love and abundance in my life.
- My intention is to lovingly care for my body and to set boundaries, both within and outside myself, that support health, vitality and peace of mind.
- My intention is to give my best to life.

The power of intention

It is one of life's more powerful mysteries that what we hold close to us through thoughts, feelings and beliefs is indeed what we become. You may already wish and hope for a change in your life but have neglected to state *exactly* what the nature of that change might be or might look like. When living with intention, you have a task to undertake at the outset – to determine clearly the direction that you want to move towards.

Intentions have power because they activate dormant capacities inside of us. Words, connected to the energy of our inner resources, are the creative agent. Once they are spoken, once they are committed to, they activate inner resources and direct the process. Intentions are an expression of the unison of your thoughts and feelings, making up the soul movements within. An intention is the spoken manifestation of the sum total of that inner energy of thoughts, feelings

and desire. When you claim an intention and stay connected to it over time, you change, and the life around you also changes.

You cannot pull an intention from your rational mind or ego. Your ego self may come up with goals like “I want to win the lottery,” “I want that lovely, sexy person I’m lusting after,” or “I want the perfect life.” Intention comes from the connection you make with a place of deeper wisdom inside – what, I believe, is the ‘heart mind’ that values and knows that your purpose is to change and grow. Intentional living is about supporting your inner shifts, allowing you to mature and develop, thereby enabling you to create a happy and good life that is not necessarily dependent on outer circumstances.

“Your outer life is a direct manifestation of the beliefs, feelings, thoughts and attitudes that live within you. You are their creator! If you don’t like how your life is going, focus on the inner level to find and shift those thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes, and in due course, your outer life will change in direct proportion to your new inner state. Such change begins with your willingness to state what you want to create – these are the words of your intention.”

Finding the right words

In articulating your intention in relationship to your healing work, you will want to consider the question: “What are the exact words that reflect my purpose and desire for my therapeutic work?” This will be an evolving process, and the words may subtly or dynamically shift as the process unfolds – this is what I mean about ‘following the mystery’ (as mentioned in the section above). You will feel an internal ‘click’ when you get the words just right.

Usually it’s best to condense the words down to a very precise statement – a statement you can repeat to yourself throughout the day. Fewer, rather than more words seem to resonate and offer a more powerful effect.

Sidebar:

More examples of an intention

- My intention is to create work that allows me to contribute to the world, brings me fulfillment, satisfaction, success and a comfortable income.
- My intention is to explore and resolve my issues with giving and receiving love.
- My intention is to open to the power of the sacred feminine.

As you say these words to yourself frequently – which I encourage you to do – you will notice that they affect your energy, bringing you back into alignment sometimes very quickly. In the course of your healing journey, you will lose

motivation and need to re-focus many times. It is through this kind of work that you can change deeply held beliefs about yourself and how life works.

Riding the wave of intention

Affirming a positive intent is particularly powerful in our healing work, because it will bring to the fore in a clearer, more precise way any forces that are counter to it. And we want and need to be aware of this usually underground energy that inhibits our moving towards wellbeing and fulfillment.

Strong counter currents will arise, wanting to convince you that you cannot live in a different way and that, perhaps, even trying to is not a good idea. This is helpful, although at first it might be a bit of a blow to your idealized self-image! When we truly know how and why we block our own fulfillment and happiness, we can work with and heal these parts of ourselves, thereby fulfilling a significant part of our life task here on planet earth.

Your intention is your most potent tool to work with these inhibiting voices, whether they arise inside or come from others trying to persuade you to stay in the status quo. So, it is important to say your intention deeply, not by rote. Really speak the words while connected to your heart-felt desire, and let them sink in and allow yourself to be deeply affected by the words.

Words of intention have potent power that you will feel immediately as an energy inside. However, it is not realistic to expect these words to change your outer circumstances right away. Think about this: The forces and beliefs that run your life now were imprinted in you over years and years, from childhood on. Your new practice of intention will no doubt speed the shifts that need to happen within you, but such formidable change is incremental, happening in small pieces over time, not dramatically overnight or following one day on retreat. The intention to change may be fully realized within you quickly, but the deepening of and opening to the change will take time. Patience and determination – as well as courage – can become your guides.

The changes come on the inner level first and then begin to affect your outer circumstances. You will notice a slow, gradual experience – if you are tuned in to the energy currents within yourself. You will feel subtle, slight changes that can grow and deepen if you seize frequent opportunities to do things differently.

In my own life, the intentions I have held did their work under the surface for a very long time before fully manifesting. For some intentions, it took so long for the changes to manifest fully that I almost missed the connection of those changes to the original words I had spoken, with deep heart-felt desire, so long ago.

So that is the first step – find and write down the very precise words that will guide your work. Then, stay connected to those words. Frequently speak them to yourself or out loud. As the days and weeks pass, tune in to see if the words need to be changed subtly or perhaps substantially. This is an evolving, moving process, so the words may need to shift over time too. Listen inside to hear if they sound just right for you now. It will be interesting to save your intentions to see how they shift and evolve over the weeks, months, and years.

Working with your active and receptive states

Working with your intention is a dance between the active and the receptive states within you. The active part requires you to make an effort on your own behalf. It engages your positive will and behaviors that promote self-awareness and alignment with the change you truly desire. I address the active principle of the intention process to a large extent in this text. However, your receptive nature is equally important – it is your ‘non-doing’ state, which must relax into the change process. The receptive allows your inner energies to do their work, while you let go and open to the healing effect that comes from the power of your sincere and heart felt intention, and from the reality that the universe wants and does support your growth into wellness.

The receptive state works with what has been called “the involuntary processes” – those processes that the ego self cannot and does not control, but must give over to in order for the deeper healing to happen. The receptive is subtle and requires a patient, open attitude and quiet listening to sense into its presence and to surrender to it. Meditation or being still in nature are ideal settings to cultivate awareness and alignment with your receptive self.

Adding ‘juiciness’ to your intention

Commit to daily practice

You will need to regularly stand back and see how your actions, attitudes and behaviors are aligned, or not, with your words of intention. This is the everyday application of learning to live with intention. Keeping your intention with you throughout the day will help you notice when your behaviors or reactions are aligned with your intention, or when they are working against it. Keeping it present becomes the tool that motivates and supports you to act in ways that will bring the change you want. Returning to your intention throughout the day will help you become more mindful of how your attitudes, feelings and actions create your life. You will begin to “connect the dots” between your intention and your actions. This, in turn, will lead you from the status of a victim of life’s challenges to the role of creator of the life you envision for yourself.

Visualize your intention

Harnessing the power of visualization adds additional energy to your practice. As you work with your intention, take a few moments regularly to visualize yourself in the new state. In a relaxed mental state, engage all your senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting – and include the feeling level as well as the physical. Let your imagination fire up and put yourself into your new reality. In this way, you begin to *feel* the change already happening, even before it has fully manifested in your life.

When doing these focused sessions, you may sense an inner voice kicking up to resist your desires. It may say, “You’re dreaming. Get real!”, or “Life can’t be like that... at least not for you.”, or “Don’t hope for this – you might get disappointed.” We each have our own fears, our inner critic, or our resisters to change. When these voices crop up, take a few moments to acknowledge them and let them speak. Do this with the understanding that what we fight against in ourselves, gains power over us.

Understand your resistances

Often the voices inside that speak against our intention are just a misguided form of self-protection, protecting us from change that often feels threatening at first. As they arise, listen to them and try to discern their source – perceived injustices, fears from your personal history, or resistances from your cultural beliefs. Take a few moments to be with them. Your aim is not to feed them, or allow yourself to become more identified with their energy, but these are the parts of you that are trying to heal and hence have meaning and purpose. So be glad they have shown themselves. You may want to thank them for their presence at this time, showing up more clearly for healing. And then ask yourself: “Is this the whole truth? Do these beliefs still apply to my life now? Are these the beliefs I want to be living with from now on?”

Take time to consider how these voices, and their words, their ensuing energy and the attitudes they feed fit with your intention. This action will help you work with these voices in order to recognize, heal, integrate and finally disengage your energy from them, which is a key aspect of the healing process. Through this deeper practice of intention and understanding your resistances, you will strengthen your positive will and develop your healthy ego, the parts of you that are aligned with the vision and words of your intention. This is how you transform your inner landscape and, in due course, your outer life as well.

More Exercises & Actions

Draw out your intention with reflective exercises

- Sit quietly and listen inside. Ask your deepest self to be able to hear your heart's own longing at this time. Ask to be guided to know the exact words that will speak your heart's greatest desire. Let the words come. Write down whatever comes to you.
- Play with the words until they feel "just right," until you feel the 'click' inside that says, "This is my heart's deepest desire." Let the words move about the page, change and grow as you reflect on them. Gently set aside the 'critic' each time s/he appears. Take your time, and let the words come to you, perhaps even over a number of days.
- Now take a larger view. Zoom out a bit and ask yourself about the behaviors, thoughts, feelings and other aspects of your life that will relate to this intention. Make some notes about these, to better see how your intention will manifest in your day-to-day living.

Keep your intention present with strengthening actions

- Write out your intention several times and put it in places where you will see it easily. You can write your intention on small cards, place them in your home and workspace, and carry one in a pocket. Pull it out often, especially when you feel lost or directionless, or when you may be tempted to stray from what you know is best for you.
- Each morning when you wake, spend a few quiet moments with your intention – write it out again, speak it out aloud, or journal about it. Also, journal about actions, behaviors, feelings and energy that you sense relate to your intention.
- Take a few moments each day to engage your imagination and visualize yourself in the new state of your intention.
- If negative voices arise, which they probably will, take some time to listen to them and really feel into what they are all about and why they are here, their 'agenda' and 'script' for your life; their meaning and purpose as 'signposts' in your healing dynamic. You will find that these voices are quite familiar and repetitive, and even laughable at times. Acknowledge that their words live in you, and question them with the motive of seeking the truth about them. Feel the effect of their energy on you and on your hopes and dreams. Identify the sources from which they come. Thank

them for their input and take a few moments to send love and compassion to this part of you that longs to be seen and reunited in wholeness.

- Practice empathetic listening and be open to the kernel of wisdom that may be contained in these negative voices despite their seemingly incongruent aspects. Then, consciously choose to align with your new beliefs that are emerging and are represented by the words of your intention. Sometimes there is an energy that likes to be resistant to goodness or to dig in its heels and say “No!” just for the pure pleasure of saying no. If and when you bump into this negativity, you can acknowledge and appreciate its determination and tenacity, but also know that its presence requires you to set a firm boundary between it and your emerging creation. Then, bring your focus back to your positive intent.
- Notice when and if you need to change the words of your intention, whether slightly or drastically.
- Notice and write down what is being revealed to you about your intention as the days unfold.
- Notice if your intention has run its course, or if it still has “juice” for you. Do you need to write a new one? Revising and rewriting your intention is an integral part of healing and growth.

Copyright © 2009 Madeline Dietrich