

Making New Year's Resolutions Stick!

By Beth Banning and Neill Gibson

In January it's traditional to make New Year's resolutions. You plan to go to the gym, get into great physical shape, earn more money, improve a troubled relationship, or get along better with your family members.

But you suspect that in a few days or weeks you'll get tired of making the effort and your good intentions will disappear. Would you like to improve your chances of making your resolutions stick?

Maybe you worry about how much effort and work is involved, or you think it isn't possible to have these things. Just like last year, you'll slip back into your old patterns. Well, there is a fun and easy way to begin to create your ideal life with little effort on your part. It starts by creating a values-based intention.

What is a Values-Based intention?

Your intention is what you want right now that directs your actions toward an outcome. A values-based intention simply expresses those qualities you value greatly that you wish to experience in the current situation. They do not include any strategic planning about how you might experience those qualities.

As examples of the qualities, you might want your life to be more peaceful and harmonious. Or you might crave adventure and discovery. Maybe you want to create more connection and trust with someone you love. Or maybe, during meetings at work, you want more support and effectiveness. You can make intentions for your life as a whole or for any situation or relationship.

Why Create Values-Based Intentions?

The biggest reason is you can use yet this powerful tool to begin to experience the quality of life you would really like, including making good on your personal resolutions, New Year's or otherwise.

Instead of forcing yourself to follow the next new self-improvement strategy or worrying about how you're going to accomplish the items on your to-do list, creating a values-based intentions removes stress and worry from the process.

Creating these intentions takes only a few minutes. When you decide what you really want in your life and begin to follow these few simple steps, things you want will start to happen in a more stress-free way.

How Do You Create This Kind of Intention?

Let's start with one of your New Year's Resolution. Step back from that goal or strategy and decide what qualities you want to experience from that goal or in that situation, then use those qualities when you write down your intention.

The goal is to use positive language and present tense. Don't write an intention about what you don't want or use destructive or defeating language. Avoid sentences like, "I don't want to get sick."

Here are some examples: "I intend to be **healthy** and **fit**," or "I intend to create a relationship of **connection** and having **fun** with my sister." Notice that intentions are expressed as values, or qualities of life. It is these qualities of life that we wish to experience, the strategies we use to experience them are incidental.

You can create intentions to help you keep your resolutions about your health, your appearance, your job or finances, your possessions, your relationships, or anything else.

If you know what you want to experience in some area of your life but aren't sure how to get there, you can create a values-based intention and just let it do the work for you. As [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#) said:

"The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now."

Having set in motion that intention to experience certain qualities in your life you will then be drawn to recognize the many opportunities that come your every day to realize that intention.

What's the Difference Between an Intention and a Strategy?

An intention expresses the values or qualities you want to experience, while a strategy points to a specific person, action, and time to accomplish something. For example, strategies for creating more connection and fun with your sister might look like this: "Every time I see my sister, I'm going to tell her something that I enjoy about her," or, "I'm going to make a regular lunch date with my sister."

If there are specific strategies, or actions, that you know will support your intention, write them down. For example, a few months ago I wrote my intention for health and fitness, and I added these strategies: "Every morning I will visualize myself as the perfect weight for optimal health," "Before each meal I will choose the exact right food to provide everything that I need," and "Every day I will exercise for 30 minutes in some way that I enjoy."

I read my intention and strategies for my resolution every day, and something strange happened; I lost a few pounds without trying. Shopping for food and ordering in restaurants no longer brought up anxiety. I just knew what to buy and order. I'd find myself going out for an energetic walk in the evening when I used to be napping. Every day I found some way to exercise, even if it was only a 10-minute yoga break. The best

thing is that I stopped forcing myself to eat a certain way or follow a strict exercise regimen. I just did it.

Can Intentions Improve Your Relationships?

Yes! Decide what qualities you'd most like to have with this person and write them down.

You can even create intentions about people who have never heard of "intention," or people who you're experiencing conflict with. You might want to include qualities that are missing for you, such as cooperation. An example might be, "I intend to create a relationship of consideration, trust, and honesty with Ron."

remember it is your responsibility to experience the qualities that you desire , so if you want trust, consideration, and honesty that is for you to do, However, since you've committed to this intention, you might notice that you start being more considerate and honest with him. You might find yourself telling him that you would like more honesty in your relationship.

Intentions also work great when you create them with others. When a couple of our friends were planning their wedding the woman noticed that the man had started to get anxious about making decisions. She asked him what he would like to experience during the planning, and he said "ease." Together they came up with three qualities they wanted: ease, fun and harmony. After that, whenever things would get tense, they'd remind each other of their intention and look for opportunities to experience those qualities in that present moment. It paved the way for a stress-free experience.

How Can You Make Your Intentions More Powerful?

What you focus your attention on grows, so if you spend a few minutes every day reading the intentions you created for your resolution out loud, they are more likely to happen. A good time might be in the morning before you get started with your day.

The more often you read your intentions, the more powerful they are. We know some people who were so impressed with the power of intention setting that they formed groups where they would meet once a week or once a month and read their intentions out loud.

If you find yourself slipping into negative thoughts, such as "This will never work," or "I'll never be able to have what I want," remind yourself gently to focus on what you do want.

Do intentions really help you turn your resolutions into reality?

Try them out and see! Pick a few areas of your life where you would like to see some changes, and write down the qualities you want to experience, beginning your intention with the words, "In this situation _____, I intend to create _____..."

Make sure you express what you want in terms of what you value and in positive language in the present tense. If you have some strategies that would help you to

realize your intention, write them down too. Every day, take a few minutes to read your intentions out loud. Then notice what starts to change in your life.

Keep at it and you'll be amazed at how quickly your New Year's resolutions start to become your reality

If you're ready to improve your chances of making your resolutions stick, sign up for our thought-provoking and motivational [Weekly Action Tips eMail series](#). Each tip offers unique self-help skills and personal growth techniques designed to help you focus on the things that are most important to you. [Sign up today!](#)

Remember, the shortest path to a happy life is found through conscious choice.

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