

Why Be Intentional

Intentional is Proactive

Versus Reactive

With Reactive others are pulling your strings and pushing your buttons

“Intentional living is the art of making our own choices before others’ choices make us.”

- Richie Norton

Intentionality. It is a word that is thrown around often. We’re told to “be intentional” in our relationships or “pursue intentionality” in our daily lives. But what does that really mean? And why should we even care?

We might care because intentionality is the golden ticket to achieving our goals in life; to living a life that *we craft for ourselves* rather than waiting to see what direction life may take us.

Living intentionally is the process of making decisions and living in a way that aligns with *your* values and priorities, and then executing on those decisions with clarity and focus. Think of your life like a long ride on a beautiful horse. If you’re intentional, *you* hold the reins, *you* decide when to turn or stop, gallop or go slow. The unintentional rider lets the horse decide where it’s going, and most times they end up in a smelly barn in front of a pile of musty hay!

Being intentional focuses your goals and clarifies the steps you need to take to achieve them. For each person, this looks different and it is an ever-evolving process. There is much you can do to cultivate a mindset of intentionality. Below are three steps you can take that will help you stay focused and intentional.

Define Your Values

If living intentionally requires us to make choices based on our values, then we need to know what those values are. Identify what motivates you and drives you. Focus on the areas that bring you joy and determine what you want to do to continue moving in that direction. In the same way, do an internal audit and identify the areas that leave you feeling drained and

eliminate them. Check-in with yourself and your values on a regular basis - being in-tune with your values helps you move from passive living to intentional living.

Practice Gratitude

Gratitude itself is an act of intentionality. You INTEND to notice those things that have served you well and bring you joy; you INTEND to focus on them and let go of the things that didn't serve you or that felt like a drain on your emotions or time. Remember - your brain is like an exquisite operating system on a supercomputer; it runs itself for the most part, but it responds without fail to the programs YOU load into it - whether they're positive and helpful, or negative and self-defeating. Every day you get to choose what programs will run on the operating system of your life. Intentionally choosing to load gratitude onto your "hard drive" will result in a smoother-running, more nimble and reliable experience.

Slow Down

It's so easy to just fly through the day only to get to the end and think "what did I do today that moved me closer to my goals?" or "what did I do today that reflects the things I value - friendship, connection, justice, relationship?" Stop just going through the motions, and really consider if your daily activities are aligned with your values and with how you want your life to be. Take time to declutter your life (including decluttering how you spend your time) and be okay with saying "no." Instead, choose to fill your days with things that add value, especially things that support and enrich your significant relationships. It's said that intentionality multiplies the power of each relationship that is important to us, because what we focus on grows and expands. Focus on the good, the valuable, the encouraging, and let the rest just float away. As you build up your intentionality muscles, make sure to leave enough room to savor the day instead of just flying through it!

The path to living intentionally is an ongoing journey. Embrace your values and let them guide your choices in the day-to-day. Over time, you'll see just how life-changing it is.