

# Daily Intentions

## *An Intuitive Approach to More Success with Less Stress*

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# Daily Intentions

## An Intuitive Approach to More Success with Less Stress

Goals, objectives and intentions are similar and can actually look the same. It's really the *process* of setting an intention that is distinct and meaningful. Many goal statements are acceptable if they include just a metric or describe an activity: "I will increase my income by 10% next year," or "I will present at the conference." Intentions, by contrast, contain additional layers of emotional meaning that help you intuitively manage your thoughts time and energy. For example, "In 2015 I am comfortable, happy and have more disposable income." As you can see, the latter statement provides more flexibility for how this success statement might come about. It could occur by increasing income or by reducing expenses (or both), and it's defined by its emotional impact.

*Intentions provide intuitive and meaningful guidance for living into them. Intentions have a unique ability to create change.*

### Intention-setting is an art

There's more art than science to intentions because they take into consideration – very intuitively and naturally – the fluid nature of your own personal development and the world around you. You're a growing, changing being and so is everyone else. What you want and need today can be different tomorrow and adjust dramatically based on a slight or big shift in what happens around you.<sup>1</sup> Simple goals aren't built to adjust to this reality but intentions thrive on it. When you learn to use intentions, you, too, will be thriving on the constant change in your world, and that's when you become a master at accomplishing just about anything that's really important to you.

*Intentions work because they reorient us to our world and reframe our present situation in light of the desired future, which highlights obstacles and opportunities previously unseen. They align our energies so we become focused on what's important more easily.*

### What is an intention?

Intentions describe your desired future state – *as a state of BEING*. They bring your emotions, right brain and even your physical body into knowing what success feels like. You can intend anything - to be rich, on an island, surrounded by happy people, managing a less stressed team, running a larger company, tapping into a new market, a leader in your industry, etc. If you can feel "it" being true, you can set your intention on "it." While you can set intentions in groups as well as for yourself, in this exercise we're going to concentrate only on setting personal intentions.

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<sup>1</sup> Think of a time when something happened that changed your world dramatically, an unexpected new project or promotion, a natural disaster or death of someone close to you. All these things, good and bad, can change your life and even who you think you are in an instant. Intentions are designed to help you adapt to the big and small changes, both, without losing sight of your objective.

## How Do Intentions Work: They Shift Your Approach to Success

Even though intentions sometimes feel like magic when they're working, they're not magic at all. They're basically a natural way to organize your mind and heart around what you want to achieve, and then marshal all the intuitive powers of you and the people you share the intention with – your family, friends and colleagues – to bringing it about. When you set an intention – and can feel it as though it were true – your brain automatically shows you the gap between where you are now and where you want to be, and gives you ideas for closing it. "Minding the gap" is all you have to do to succeed.

### Intentions Are Always:

- Positive
- Present tense
- Emotionally meaningful
- Specific about What
- Specific about When
- Ignoring the "How"

*Achieve great things without achieving great stress.*

Intentions focus your mind and heart on the outcome you desire in an integrated way, engaging you holistically. Such comprehensive focus helps you define success and achieve the necessary perspective to attain it in ways that feel very natural and unforced. Your objective feels real and the choices you make to move towards it become more tangible as well. Staying fixated on the outcome – the intention – and making progress towards it, allows you to focus on what really matters. And when you're focused on what matters, it is much easier to release the worry over the other stuff like the details that are not decisive, anxiety over something that hasn't occurred yet (and may not), and worry that you don't know everything (because the intention focuses you on knowing only what matters). Your intention is so desirable that letting go of things that get in its way – including activities, things, people and beliefs - is easier.

*Intentions open you up to possibilities you never dreamed of and help you identify what's really most important to your happiness.*

When you're focused on a positive outcome, it's easier to let go of how it is achieved. If your intention is to achieve a certain income level but you do it by getting half as many customers as you planned who are paying three times as much money, rejoice in your intention achieved, don't beat yourself up because your plan was wrong. If you intend to give yourself more personal time and you achieve it by giving up your seat on a volunteer board to someone with more expertise, rejoice as well because someone else is helping you achieve your intention. Take satisfaction and rejoice any time your intention is achieved, no matter how it comes about. And in focusing on your intention, be open to all avenues that can bring it to you; this is your intention opening you to new possibility. Whatever you do, if your intention is achieved in ways you didn't imagine initially, don't declare failure! Accept what your intention brought you and reset your next intention more precisely based on what you've learned.

### *Encourage great creativity and innovation.*

Part of becoming open to possibility is that it opens you to think “outside the box” with virtually no effort what so ever. You don’t need to twist your brain around thinking about what to do next, your intention usually organizes your perception of the challenge you face in getting from where you are now to your success state very naturally, bringing out great innovation and creativity. Give yourself room to be creative and don’t worry too much when it doesn’t seem like a direct path at first. Creativity often brings in a back door solution you didn’t know was there. Keep focusing on the intended outcome and shift your actions into alignment with the intention to bring it about.

#### **Intentions Help With Everything**

*True Story:* Susan expected to improve her business with intentions (which she did), but she also got rid of her back pain. When she set her intention on being “pain free,” her right brain started giving her posture suggestions and in two days the pain was almost gone!

### *Achieve a sense of mastery over your life and work.*

When you’re focused on a positive feeling state, it’s easier to let go of how it is achieved. If your intention is to manage two demanding projects without giving up your workout schedule you have several ways of doing it. You may accomplish your intention by delegating some key tasks, or staggering milestones on the two projects, or working out an hour earlier every morning or some combination of all these strategies. It’s also possible that you could encounter a “luck event,” someone new detailed temporarily to your staff who can take on some of the work or some other benefit “out of the blue.” If this happens, rejoice in your intention achieved, don’t beat yourself up because “it was just dumb luck.” Of course, you have to make some calculated risks in determining your intention, but that’s part of the process. Decide what’s most important, set your intention and let your focus steer you towards the best strategies to help you make use of any luck you encounter along the way.

### *Help in achieving the ever-elusive work-life balance.*

There’s no magic formula to work-life balance, but by reducing the stress and worry involved in achieving things personally and at the office, you will find it easier to set your intention for balance, and achieve it. Intentions help you with focus and prioritization. Each time you accomplish one intention you move to the next, and so in baby steps you can accomplish much more and – over time – achieve balance you can’t always achieve in a single day or even week.

### *Increase the chances for serendipity.*

When you’re clear on your own intention, you can speak about it more clearly to others, many of whom can help you achieve it – but only after you share it with them!

For example, if you intend to institute a new process with a team that is traditionally resistant to “outside meddling” and share your positive intention with others who’ve worked with them, you may learn nuggets of insight that will help you be more successful. If you intend to propose a higher budget for a project, when you share this intention with a knowledgeable colleague they may help you understand where there is “slush” in the budget that might be reallocated for your project. If your intention is to get more exercise at home, sharing this information with someone waiting in the lunch line may turn you on to their neighbor who is selling a treadmill at a great price. While you should be prudent about who you share what information with, discussing your intention with others is both a good networking strategy and a great way to help you tap into resources that will help you achieve your intentions.

## What Should You Set Intentions For?

You can set intentions for anything... a day, a month, a year, a project, a relationship, a meeting or anything you can think of accomplishing. Here’s a quick example of how to set an intention for an upcoming activity. Try this out for something you have to do later today to get a “feel” for how intentions can help you intuitively focus on doing and saying the right things for the outcome you seek.

1. **Choose an activity coming up in the next 2 hours:** (e.g., *biking with dad*)
2. **What would “success look like” for you in this activity?** (e.g., *exercise, tell him about Sarah*)
3. **Describe how you want to feel when you’ve achieved this “success state”?** (e.g., *I am energated, relaxed, feeling close to dad*)
4. **“Put it on” and Being Emotionally Present with an “Anchor Feeling”:** **FEEL** the success state you expect when your intention has been met (e.g., *I am breathing hard and laughing with dad*)
5. **Feel it in advance and name it.** Take a moment right now. imagination to help your emotions and physical body engage with the feeling state you identified above. Find an “Anchor Feeling” and associate it with an image, a physical sensation, a word or phrase or a motion that can help you and go back to that feeling whenever you want to. Give your Anchor Feeling a name. (e.g., *Fist bump with dad*)
6. **Jot down your Feeling State and Anchor Feeling.** This is your intention for your next few hours: (e.g., *I’m relaxed, energated, feeling close to dad - breathing hard, seeing dad smile as we give each other a fist bump while locking our bikes in front of our favourite juice bar.*)
7. **Mind the Gap:** This is the most important step! Keep remembering your Anchor Feeling as often as you can for the next few hours and notice the gap between where you and where you want to be. *In the example above it will help you intuitively do things like get to the park on time, pump harder while biking to feel energated, tell dad about Sarah in a way that makes you feel close to him and makes him feel like smiling!*

## How to Set A Daily Intention

While you can use the same process to set life-changing and vision-oriented intentions, that takes some time, so I want to make sure you get a chance to start working with intentions in a way that will help you begin to practice the art of it and get a feel for how powerful it can be. Setting a daily intention is a great way to start seeing productivity improve immediately while managing your stress proactively. You'll also begin to work with the practice of setting aside the details and adjusting your intention to reality "on the fly" in the sense that you'll review and revise on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup>

### Keys to Success

**15-30 minutes:** You'll need to schedule some dedicated intention-review time in your calendar at the beginning and end of every day you use intentions. I suggest 30 minutes the first day or two so you get used to the worksheet, but you can quickly collapse that to 15 or even less. The point is to take time and focus *intentionally* on what you're trying to achieve.

**"Putting It On" and Becoming Emotionally Present With an "Anchor Feeling":** Even though it's on a worksheet, you must be emotionally present and *FEEL* the success state you expect when your intention has been met. Use your imagination to help your emotions and physical body engage and go back to that feeling whenever you remember it. Draw pictures or create movements to help bring it back to you easily. Taking the time to focus will help you with this, but it's the art and practice part of this, so find the approach that works best for you.

**Mind the Gap:** When you set an intention, it's important to know that you are committed to making it happen and manage the tension (i.e., "the gap") between where you are now and where you want to be. When you do this you'll engage both parts of your brain in solving how to close the gap. Stay in the tension and commit to closing the gap!

#### "Putting it on"

A key to intention setting is using your imagination to see and feel the world and yourself as though your intention has already come to pass. Taking a few moments to become as emotionally, visually and physically aware of how you will feel in the future gives your right, intuitive brain, a TON of information that it will use to help guide you through your day, sometimes unconsciously! Take the time to do this and learn to do it frequently through the day.

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<sup>2</sup> I don't suggest you adjust your intention in the middle of the day to start, but as you become more practiced at it, you can use your judgment to adjust as needed. To start, stick with it on a daily basis so you can notice the tension between your intention and reality, even if you don't always succeed. When you debrief the intentions that weren't met, you'll have a chance to see how you might have set your intention better to begin with, and this is experience you can use to adjust more fluidly in the future.

## Getting Control Of Your Daily ToDo List

Setting a daily intention is designed to help you manage your ToDo list. Remember that intentions are about managing your thoughts, time and energy. There is NO WAY you can possibly have the time and energy to do everything on your ToDo list. There isn't. Just give up on that idea right now and open yourself to the belief that you can *still* succeed and achieve everything you need and want without having to DO everything yourself. Why? Because "life happens" and quite often your ToDo list just can't keep up. Time and energy are fluid. Learn to accept this and work with this reality. Stay focused on your intention, release everything else and achieve *your* definition of success.

One of the best outcomes of the Daily Intention process is that you begin to see that you can accomplish things without focusing on them, sometimes because other people do them (yay!), or because you achieve your intention some other way, (yay!). Be content with an intention achieved, no matter how it happened. And take credit for it too, for yourself always and to others whenever it's appropriate.

*Intentions clarify priorities and challenges quickly. When you set an intention, be prepared to see opportunities for change right away.*

A word to the wise, intentions will focus your attention and energy on what matters most to you. If you've been carrying around a lot of not-terribly-important things on your ToDo list you may find that intentions crowd them out. This is a good thing. If you don't have time for them, then you don't have time for them. Let them go.<sup>3</sup> If they need to come back, they will come back in a form you can set an intention around. With intentions, you can be confident that you're focusing on what matters most. Trust yourself and the universe that what matters most will make the biggest impact and help you find more success, more quickly.

*To create space for your intention to come into being, something else has to be let go.*

Use the worksheet on p. 12 for at least three days in a week (make yourself multiple copies) to see how intentions work for you. Keep using them whenever you need to be productive!

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<sup>3</sup> If you find yourself struggling with letting things go because you're emotionally tied to them, consider the negative feelings this brings up and learn to detriquer your emotions (<http://InPowerCoaching.com/dettrigger>).

### Inspiration

Trust the Universe. Your vision sets your limits, so envision boldly!

- Chris McGoff

There is power in accepting reality – even when it throws you a curveball. Intentions will guide you in how to adjust your actions and strategies when reality bites (which it inevitably will!)

- Dana Theus

### Warning

Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it!

## Step 1: The Night Before

Take your ToDo list and set it aside (so it won't go anywhere). Agree with yourself that you will look at this list again the day after tomorrow, or when your intention is met.

- **Imagine yourself at the END of tomorrow** – when you leave work or crawl into bed – and imagine that you are calm and happy and stress free. Take a moment to just feel stress free now. Give yourself permission for just these few moments not to worry about stuff. Breathe.
- **Ask your tomorrow-night self:** What was the one thing that happened in the last 24 hours that made me feel so relaxed? Force yourself to choose one thing at first. Later you can add things, but never more than three.
- On the page 12 worksheet **write down your intention that this one thing happen** – in the present tense. e.g., *I'm relieved that the Johnson account is under control.* OR *I am relaxed and my desk is clear.* OR *I am confident and ready for the big meeting.* Let yourself feel what that will be like when this intention is true and give this Anchor Feeling a name.
- Finally, **write down the fewest number of things you must do to achieve just this intention**, (*i.e., the intention cannot be met if they don't*).
- Next, **write down the fewest number of things other people must do** for your intention to come into being (not everything they can do, just what they must do – *i.e., the intention can't be met if they don't*). Don't forget to ask them to do it and share your intention with them.
- **Leave your intention and only these few ToDo's that are related to your intention on your desk** or in your notebook for the next morning. Relax and know that tomorrow you WILL achieve your intention for the next day.
- As you go home or turn in for the night, **let yourself imagine what it will be like at this time tomorrow when your intention has been achieved.** FEEL it. KNOW it will happen. KNOW you will stay committed to making it happen.

### Should you wait for a "light" day to practice this?

If you have a light day coming up soon, go for it.

Give yourself the ability to ease into this process. But if you don't have any light days (we often don't), don't wait!

Choose a day when you have a big thing that must happen and use that to focus your intention around. Intentions are designed to help us with the most important things.

If you don't have any light days or any big things, choose tomorrow and choose one of the things on your ToDo list to make a big thing. There is no time like the present. Literally. Just do it.

## Step 2: The Day

- When you start your day, **look at your intention again** and revise it if necessary to accommodate any new information or insights you've had. **Jot down your Anchor Feeling somewhere convenient** to help you remember to keep checking in and feeling it throughout the day.
- **Focus on your Anchor Feeling for 2 minutes now. Feel that stress-free feeling you'll have at the end of the day when your intention has been met.** Allow yourself to be in that place of calm and relief and relaxation physically and emotionally for at least 2 minutes.
- **Commit to yourself that you will achieve this intention today.**
- **Focus on doing only the ToDo's for your intention today**, keeping that Anchor Feeling - how you'll feel when your intention has been realized – close to you all day and taking time out to remember to feel it. Continually challenge yourself to develop new ideas about how to get to that success state, where your intention has been met and you're feeling stress free.
- **Follow the distraction rule.** If you have extra time to deal with other things that come up or were on your other lists, you may do them, but NOT at the expense of those on your intention's ToDo list. *If you decide to set your intention aside to focus on something else, do it intentionally and set a new intention!*
- **You might be surprised to notice that time and energy show up differently today.** When people ask you to do things unrelated to your intention, and you remember your commitment to your intention, watch how easily and calmly you tell them you'll get back to them at another time or direct them to someone else – all because you are following your intention and committed to meet it at the end of today. People may stop asking you to do unrelated stuff – which is ok! Jot down any commitments you make for the next day and know you'll deal with it when it's not competing with your intention.
- **Focus on your intention, KNOWING** that it will happen and you'll end the day stress free.

### The Distraction Rule

If other things come up, allow yourself to deal with them UNLESS they distract needed energy and attention from your intention. Do not get distracted from what MUST happen to accomplish your intention

*Put on your intention as often as you can throughout the day.*

*This will not only help you maintain your focus,  
but it will help you relax and reduce your stress even before your intention is true!*

## Step 3: The End Of the Day

- If you meet your intention early, don't set your intention for tomorrow. Either dive into your messy ToDo list and try to knock off a few things you can do easily, or set a new intention for the end of THIS DAY. Save tomorrow's intention – for tomorrow.
- At the end of the day (or whenever your intention is met), **congratulate yourself and KNOW you have done what you set out to do.** Congratulate yourself even if luck helped! Take at least 2 minutes to feel the relaxation and calm you only imagined earlier. You may be tempted to start thinking ahead and focus on tomorrow's intention, but resist this urge and just feel your accomplishment emotionally and physically. Notice the impact this has on your stress levels.
- Take a few moments to **consider the reflection prompts** at the end of this exercise. Enjoy the process of thinking about how you achieved success so you're more aware of what worked and can repeat it more intentionally in the future. You don't have to reflect like this every day, but it's a good idea to do so as much as you can as you're learning and periodically in the future when you have the time or notice your own prioritization process changing.
- **If your intention didn't happen, ask yourself whether you made more progress than you might have without the intention.** If the answer is yes! then be content that the intention is working for you, but may not have been a good one to choose to happen in a single day.
  - **Consider how you might revise it in such a way that you could have met it.** E.g., *"I couldn't have gotten the Johnson account under control myself, but I could have understood my role better and committed to an intention that delivered my portion by the end of the day."*
  - **Consider that you made choices throughout the day to reprioritize and accept that this was your choice to revise your intentions** (i.e., own these decisions without guilt). E.g., *"My desk being clear just wasn't as important as \_\_\_\_\_ and I accept my choice to refocus*

### **If I didn't meet my intention, did I fail?**

Absolutely not! This is an art not a science. You'll often realize that setting the intention moved you closer to it than you would have gotten without it. Also, you'll be paying more attention to "what wants to happen" and learning to adjust what you want with what is most possible.

If you can look at your intention and see how you can change it to be more accomplishable OR see other things landing on your plate in a new light at the end of the day, you're learning the art. And if your life simply wasn't yours to control that day, let it go and know you did your best.

Start fresh the next day and do your best to anticipate those other things and work with them instead of against them – that's part of the art, too!

*midday and I'll choose a different day to clean my desk." OR "My boss didn't think the meeting tomorrow was as important as I did and I chose to trust her judgment." Remember that setting intentions is an art and when you don't meet them, it's not a failure, it's an opportunity to practice and learn to adapt this process to your unique brain, life and style. Use these resources to help you.*

- **Release any stress or anxiety leftover from the day**, by knowing that tomorrow you will take care of the next most important thing with a new intention. Take 2 minutes to feel relaxed knowing the day is done and what is out of your control right now is out of your control. Give yourself permission to relax and deal with what needs dealing with later – when you need to deal with it. KNOW that worrying about it won't make it happen any faster and take time to rejuvenate yourself so you have the energy to tackle tomorrow's challenges - tomorrow.
- If you wish, **set an intention for the next day** and repeat the cycle.

### Why focus on only 1 intention per day?

Real life often demands more of us, but if you practice with one per day, you'll see how the other things show up differently – not as less important but as a problem to solve so that you can maintain your focus on your intention. Use the Distraction Rule to guide you.

The goal is to learn a new kind of intuitive focus, but also to practice managing other things in ways that don't interrupt this focus. Managing the things unrelated to your intention so that you accomplish both the intention and anything else you have capacity for is a kind of intuitive problem-solving.

You'll find yourself getting creative about all your "to-dos" in order to achieve the most important things – and this is a good skill to learn!

## Reflection Prompts (Optional)

Use these questions periodically when you're reviewing and revising your intentions – especially when they worked! They will help you identify what you're doing that's working, so you can do more of it!

- **What did you find the most challenging** in setting your intention for a day? Feeling what success felt like? Zeroing in on the one thing that could make you feel successful? Connecting with the feeling of an Anchor Feeling? Whatever it was, relax and keep working with the concept until it feels easier. If you find little doubting voices popping up, tell them to come back when you're done trying this approach.
- **What did you find the easiest?** Did you find it less stressful to tell people to come back later or give the task to someone else? Was prioritization more automatic? Was it easier to cut other people off to bring the meeting or discussion back on track? Why was it so easy? Do more of that!
- **Did you find that “putting it on” and staying focused on your Anchor Feeling - how it felt to have already achieved success - helped you deal with unrelated details more easily and with less stress?** Was it easier to let go of the things you couldn't do today, and not stress about them until a time when you could deal with them? (It should be. If this doesn't feel easy, focus on feeling ok letting some things go in order to make head-way on other, more important, things.)
- **How can you keep this feeling of focus and priority alive for you all the time?**
- **Can you see how worrying about too many things makes it hard to focus on and accomplish the most important things?**
- **If you KNEW that you could accomplish anything you set your intention on in a day, why would it be important to stress about anything?** (Because there is always another day.)

## Troubleshooting Guide

Why don't intentions work sometimes? Here are some common challenges you may have.

- **Not feelin' it.** You didn't really “put it on” and connect emotionally to your Anchor Feeling through the day.
- **Hiding from the truth.** You didn't *really* want what you set your intention on.
- **You didn't follow the distraction rule** and got distracted.
- **The world wasn't cooperating.** Sometimes it doesn't. Not your fault. Start fresh.
- **Not letting go.** What more could you have let go of to succeed?
- **Expectations got in the way.** You can meet your intention and still be disappointed.
- **Focusing on the details instead of Minding the Gap.** Live in the tension of the gap to get creative about closing it.

# Worksheet: Daily Intentions

Intentions describe your future state of BEING – in present tense and positively. e.g., *I am confident and ready for the big meeting.*

## Step 1: Set Your Intention

I commit to making my Intention come into being:

By \_\_\_\_\_ p.m. on \_\_\_\_\_, I am/will \_\_\_\_\_

When my intention is met, I feel: \_\_\_\_\_

I call this Anchor Feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

*When this intention is met, I end my day stress free, committing to tomorrow - tomorrow.*

## Step 2: What Must Happen?

The **fewest, most important** things I can do to help realize this intention.

\_\_\_\_\_

The **fewest, most important** things other people can do to help realize this intention.

\_\_\_\_\_

### The Distraction Rule

If other things come up, allow yourself to deal with them UNLESS they distract needed energy and attention from your intention. Do not get distracted from what MUST happen to accomplish your intention

## Step 3: Focus on Your Intention

All day, take a few minutes 5+ times during the day to recall your Anchor Feeling and **KNOW that your intention will be met.** Check the box when you stop to remember.

I KNOW    I KNOW    I KNOW    I KNOW    I KNOW    I KNOW

Focus on the lists above. **As the day goes by, jot down things you won't do today** in order to focus on your intention - but that you want to come back to later – **on the back of this sheet.**

## Step 4: Recap The Day

\_\_\_ My intention happened! What surprised you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ My intention didn't happen. I could have framed my intention this way so that it could have been met:

My intention for tomorrow is: \_\_\_\_\_

I let my stress go, KNOWING I will meet this intention tomorrow!

*What would you need to let go of in order to allow yourself to commit to your daily intention?  
Do it. Let it go. See what happens.*

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