

Living an Intentional Lifestyle

Most of us move through each day *reacting* to the things, people, and situations we encounter. We perform tasks and make decisions, giving little or no thought to *what we're doing, how we're doing it, and most importantly, why*. Living your life on autopilot in this way means it's probably passing you by. But what if, instead of letting life *happen* to you each day, you choose to make each day *mean something* to you?

What it means to live intentionally

An intentional life is one that's designed by you, for you. It's one in which your values, your goals, and what's important to you are at the center of the actions you take and the decisions you make. Living intentionally means each day has a purpose. It's being an active participant in your own future, knowing what you want and how to get it, and consciously steering clear of autopilot mode.

Where intention can exist

Intention can be applied to just about every aspect of your life, from which route you'll take to work, to the placement of the pen cup on your desk. For now, though, let's zoom out a bit and take a look at the bigger picture in terms of these main life categories:

- **Relationships:** spouse or significant other, family, friends, kids, coworkers
- **Health:** diet, exercise, physical condition
- **Personal:** self-care, well-being (mental, emotional, and spiritual), personal growth, education
- **Environment:** home, office, getting organized, furniture arrangement, atmosphere
- **Finance:** spending habits, budgeting, saving money, consolidating/eliminating debt
- **Career:** skill development, productivity, networking, professional opportunities, retirement
- **Extracurricular:** hobbies, sports, fun activities, traveling

These are just examples. Your categories and the aspects of each should represent *your* life and *your* intentions. Keep in mind that some areas are multilayered and that not every situation will fit into one particular category or another.

How to institute intentionality

Establishing an intentional lifestyle takes some work and it won't form overnight. Start by thinking about your values and what's important to you. Pick a category where you have some clear goals you'd like to achieve and break the goals down into steps. Then, set some intentions for how you'll go about taking those steps and achieving those goals. Repeat the process with other categories that are important command your attention.

It's also important to remember that living intentionally is a skill that, just like any other, can be improved upon with practice and will become easier over time. As with any lifestyle change, however, it is an adjustment that will take some getting used to. Here are some tips to help you stay focused:

- Remind yourself of your goals and intentions throughout the day
- Demonstrate commitment by doing things that contribute to your intentions
- Practice meditation or deep breathing to help you stay mindful and present
- Think before making decisions and commitments; say yes to requests and invites only when you truly have the time, money, etc. and/or when it aligns with your intentions
- Add accountability by sharing your intentions with others
- Check in with yourself; if you're back in autopilot mode or can't seem to stay on track, it might be time to reassess your values or revise your process
- Take it one step and one day at a time
- Acknowledge milestone achievements and reward yourself

Rethink Your Resolutions

Resolutions tend to feel more like obligations than aspirations, which can make them easier to abandon. Give your goals a purpose this year by setting intentions instead of resolutions.

For more information on intention and guidance for living a life of your own choosing, contact the EAP any time, day or night.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

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