Set Intentions: Consciously steer the moments of your day and the quality of your heart

Setting intentions is a conscious practice and one you can do at a dedicated time, such as part of your morning routine, and one you can also integrate into your daily activities. Intentions are the source from which your actions spring. They bridge your desire to live from core values (for example, compassion, acceptance, generosity) to shape your daily activities and how you choose to interpret the world. Intentions can be both long-ranging (I intend to be more generous), as well as micro-nudges that guide actions (When I see a homeless ​person, I will give money). Intentions help you create a life that is aligned to what matters most to you.

Intentions come from your wisest self. When you create space in your noisy, busy mind to access awareness, you can tune in to what is important and then set intentions. Ultimately, when setting and using intentions becomes natural and easy for you, you will find your mind taking a pause before any important part of your day to get clear on what matters most. Your intentions guide you—and a clear sense of direction is a source of happiness in itself.

How:

1. Make it a daily practice. Choose a time in your morning to set intentions. Make it a habit by doing it just after something you already do, such as after you are sitting in stillness or as part of journaling.
2. Listen to your inner wisdom. First settle your mind with a few calming breaths and ask yourself: What matters most today? What matters most this week? What does my heart long for? These answers will point to intentions you can set.
3. Mine your joy list for intentions. Create a short list of activities that make you feel alive—times when you feel the most aware and vibrant. Some of my joys are being present with my daughter, creating art, swimming in open water, connecting deeply with clients, and teaching mindfulness. You can set an intention to create time for one or more of the activities that gives you a boost and be open and present when you do it.
4. Set intentions for seeing, being, and doing. What do you want to see more? Beauty, wonder, acts of kindness, good news, humorous moments, the glass half full? How do you want to “be” today? Calm, focused, open-minded, patient, generous, accepting, gentle, forgiving? What do you want to do more? Stop and breathe, listen deeply to others, do one thing at a time? Keep it short and simple.
5. Use ink. Write down your intentions on a small card or sticky note for your desk or refrigerator to bring your focus back and inspire yourself throughout the day.
6. Share intentions with loved ones. At breakfast, talk about what your intentions are for the day. This ritual not only supports the habit of setting intentions, but also lets you connect with your roommates, partner, or kids in a deeper way, and find ways to support them as they live out their own intentions.

Cameron, Laurie J. The Mindful Day: Practical Ways to Find Focus, Calm, and Joy From Morning to Evening