

January Theme

Intention: The Practice of Choosing

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Books

- *Where We Belong*, by Hoda Kotb
- *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, by Thich Nhat Hanh

Movies

- *Big Fish* (PG-13)
- *Patch Adams* (PG-13)
- *Ratatouille* (G)

Music

- 'Sleep When We Die', by Kenna
- 'Defying Gravity' from *Wicked*

Videos & Podcasts

- 'Outside In', Invisibilia podcast about the effort to change oneself by changing outer circumstances
- 'What is Your Purpose in Life?' – People ages 6-100 answer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mK66az43EOI&t=26s>
- 'Living with Intent', TED Talk by Mallika Chopra, celebrating everyday people doing everyday things with intention.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTwRlZ13NYI>
- 'What Will Your Verse Be?' from *Dead Poet's Society*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=85&v=R_zsMwCOoEs

Children's Books/Stories

- *I Have a Dream*, by Martin Luther King, Jr., ill by Kadir Nelson
- *Ahn's Anger*, by Gail Silver, ill by Christianne Kromer
- *Beautiful Oops*, by Barney Salzborg

QUOTES FOR CONTEMPLATION

Look closely at the present you are constructing. It should look like the future you are dreaming. ~ Alice Walker

It is not enough to be busy. So are the ants. The question is: What are you busy about? ~ Henry David Thoreau, Unitarian

Any dead fish can go with the flow — you have to be intentionally alive to swim against the current. ~ Ann Voskamp

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. ~ Viktor E. Frankl

Keep re-routing your brain when it defaults toward destructive behaviors and thoughts. Do it anyway. Don't let anyone make you feel like self-love and self-care are frivolous. It's not. Even the "frivolous" acts of self-care are acts of choosing yourself. ~ Dominee Wyrick

Cat: Where are you going?
Alice: Which way should I go?

Cat: That depends on where you are going.

Alice: I don't know.

Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go. ~ Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Unitarian

I do know one thing about me: I don't measure myself by others' expectations or let others define my worth. ~ Sonia Sotomayor

You too can be carved anew by the details of your devotion. ~ Mary Oliver

As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. ~ Marianne Williamson

Conscious change is brought about by the two qualities inherent in consciousness – intention and attention... Whatever you put your attention on will grow stronger in your life. Whatever you take your attention away from will wither, disintegrate and disappear. ~ Deepak Chopra

There is always a gap between intention and action. ~ Paulo Coelho

Soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining, That not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, But also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark And gives them new meanings.

~ Gloria Anzaldúa, adapted



What Does It Mean to Be a People of Intention?

“Here’s what I discovered. Intention is different from setting goals or resolutions in that it “pulls us into” who we truly are. Goals and resolutions “push us out” into future possibilities. To set intentions, we listen to our inner voice which tells us who we truly are.” ~ Katie Covey, Religious Educator, on what she learned from Soul Matters colleagues during their brainstorming session on being a people of intention

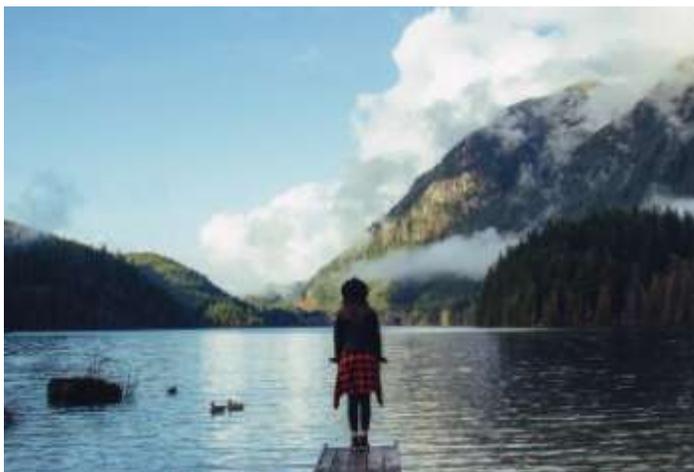
So here we are again, in the month of January with its talk of daring resolutions and its demanding call to “become better.” It’s hard not to buy into it. After all, it seems so well-intended. I mean, who could argue with the goal of self-improvement? And so most of us gladly go along and declare “This is the year I’m going to finally be a better me!”

But are we sure this is what we really want? When you read that quote above about being “pulled in” rather than “pushed out,” what happens in your heart? Do you find yourself still excited about the New Year’s work of striving to become a brand new self? Or do you suddenly notice an internal whisper that says “I long to be pulled in more deeply to the self I already am”? In other words, maybe our real New Year’s work is not about leaping into self-improvement, but about pausing, stepping back and asking “What hunger really has my heart?”

There is, after all, a big difference between becoming better and becoming ourselves. Self-improvement is not the same as self-alignment. Wanting to get from point A to point B is something quite different from longing to find your inner anchor. Goals and intentions may indeed be more distinct than we have thought.

So this month, maybe our most important work is to make room. All around us, there’s going to be plenty of busy talk about being “a people of goals and resolutions.” We are going to get more than enough advice about how to stay focused on a new future for ourselves. But in the midst of it all, may we, as a people of intention, also carve out a quieter place that keeps our attention closer to the present and who we *already are at our center*. May we make space for listening before we leap into the striving. And as we do that, maybe we will discover that this isn’t the year of “finally becoming a better me.” Maybe we’ll decide it’s enough to simply “finally be me.”

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KIDS' CORNER

An intention is something that pulls us into who we truly are. For this, we need to listen to our inner voice. Make yourself an inner voice meter so you can learn to listen to it.

Draw an imaginary meter here. Think about where it is – a cave, the brain, on top of a mountain, in a waterfall, in an inner voice tree fort? Make marks of how to measure the intention.

When you have something you want to do (your intention), ask these questions and use your inner voice meter.

1. What does my inner voice say about it?
2. Is it fair?
3. How would I feel if somebody did it to me?
4. Deep down, how do I feel about it?

JUST ONE WORD

Rather than set New Year's Resolutions for yourself this year that may or may not be remembered and focused on, why not choose one word that you want to be your focus for the year? Simplify one things by finding a quality that you'd like to cultivate more of in your life, and throughout the year, continue to ask yourself if what you're doing aligns with that one quality. Here are some ideas on how to land on your one word.

Focus on Being rather than Doing. Rather than telling you what you should be doing, your one word can inspire you to how you want to live.

Don't overthink it. There could potentially be more than one right word for you to choose – that's okay! Which one keeps coming back to you and ignites a spark? Pay attention for a few days to see what keeps surfacing.

If you're up for it, here are some journal prompts to help you:

1. Spend some time imagining what you want your life to look like. What kind of person would you like to be by the end of 2018? What do you want the condition of your heart and your relationships to be? Write a mental picture.
2. Write down the characteristics of the person you want to become.
3. Make a list of words that sum up that description or conjure up an image of that description you started with.
4. Whittle your list down to the few words that resonate most with you.
5. Turn them over and over in your heart and mind.
6. Take a deep breath and commit.

Adapted from www.oneword365.com.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of intention means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. Are you so dead set on telling your life what you intend to do with it that you no longer notice what it intends to do with you? Could your life's purpose be something that comes from life itself rather than something that is forced on it?
2. What dictates your days? Your To-Do list or your intentionality? Do you begin by asking, "What do I have to get done?" or "What do I want this day to be about?" Is it time to put down all the "doing" and pay a bit more attention to "being"? Has your long list of intentions left you feeling exhausted and even lost?
3. Are you sure "bettering yourself" is what you really want? Or is that hunger inside you about "finding and aligning with your deepest self"? Do you want to "finally be better" or "finally be me"?
4. The philosopher, Nietzsche, said, "No one can build you the bridge on which you, and only you, must cross the river of life," We are all intentionally crossing a bridge of some sort. Are you crossing someone else's bridge? Or your own?
5. Is it finally time to give up that unrealistic intention? The one you've failed at following through on again and again? The one you've been beating yourself up over, again and again? Is it time to intentionally be gentle with yourself and let it go?
6. Do you intentionally allow yourself to make mistakes? New things do not arise without trial and error, missteps and slip-ups. If we're not making mistakes, we're likely choosing safety. Are you intentionally choosing safety over new life?
7. Are you as good at assuming the good intentions of others as you are at defending your own?
8. You surely sent an unintentional message to your child this week. All parents do. The question is: Are you willing to take the time to notice it and fix it?
9. How are you doing at the work of intentional authenticity? Are you succeeding at being the same person on the outside as you are on the inside?
10. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

All contents adapted from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle resource materials for January 2018.

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JUSTICE CORNER

Two opportunities to take your Unitarian Universalist values out to the street this month and march with your fellow congregants from UUCF! Wear your yellow UUCF hats, Standing on the Side of Love and/or UUCF shirts.

Monday, January 15, Martin Luther King Day March – Gather at 9:45am at City Hall at the UU Church of Fresno banner. March begins at 10:15am. March together for progressive values, human rights, justice, and equity.

Saturday, January 20, 11am-3pm – Join Rev. Tim at the 2018 Fresno Women's March at River Park. Sign up to march with Sharon Rossi: sharonsrossi@gmail.com. March with DELORES HUERTA - American icon, labor leader and civil right activist, co-founder of the United Farm Workers.