

McNally & Associates

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS

Intentions vs. Resolutions

Set your intentions and put your stake in the ground for whatever it is. Take some time to think about where you are headed in the New Year. Tired of starting every January with resolutions only to see that by February your energy for whatever you declared on January 1 has disappeared? Instead, set intentions.

Resolutions are all about *what you should do* (activities to start, quit or do more or less of). Intentions are all about *vision and what matters most to you*. Intentions bring about a sense of satisfaction, accomplishment and contentment. What do you envision for yourself? Clear intentions energize us and propel us forward because they are linked to internal values. When we don't have clear intentions, we're subject to reactive patterns like busyness and "fire-fighting". Intentions are not task lists.

Toss out those action-focused "shoulds", such as "I should lose 10 pounds" "I should go back to school" "I should be a better leader" and turn them into intentions, such as "I want to be healthy and vibrant" and "I will challenge myself to grow beyond where I currently am by learning . . ." and "I intend to be a leader who creates a work environment where staff can do their best work".

Reflect on the questions below. Your responses will guide the development of your intentions. Write out 3-4 intentions to set the stage for the year ahead – "I intend to. . ."

- *What outcomes do you want to produce?*
- *What would you like to experience or explore?*
- *What would it look like if you were wildly successful in your current role?*
- *What is your next promotion, next venture, or next career focus?*
- *Where do you need to sharpen your leadership skills?*
- *What will keep you energized and engaged as you continue on your way?*
- *How -- specifically -- will you put your intentions into action? This is where making commitments to engage in specific practices comes into play. Look at each day as an opportunity to move yourself closer to your outcomes. Perhaps, to learn something that will be critical for you to know later or to have an opportunity to be of value to someone else.*

Each morning think about what you want to experience, learn or gain from the day and what commitments you need to keep. Focus on simple, daily action steps that support your intentions. At the end of the day, think back over your activities in the context of your commitments to assess alignment with your intentions and ask yourself the following questions:

- *What did I do today that moved me closer to intentions? What did I learn?*
- *How did I make a difference in someone else's life?*
- *What can I be thankful for?*

This practice builds awareness and helps you make new commitments the following day in service of what matters most to you.

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