

Health & Living

02/01/23 Irish Independent | Independent.ie

Allison Keating

'The new year is a time when many feel pressured to change who they are and how they feel. This is why the practice of acceptance is key to developing a compassionate view of ourselves — as we are right now' *Page 34*



⊕ **Ask the doctor:** I dread returning to work. How do I ease my anxiety? *Page 33*

WEEK ONE
January
Renewal



'I can help you make 2023 your best year yet'

Fiona Brennan: 'Your overall intention becomes the foundation for any external goals you set.'

PHOTO: STEVE LANGAN

Part one of four: Clinical hypnotherapist **Fiona Brennan** on how to align with your authentic self and why setting intentions is at the root of all positive endeavours

Welcome to 2023. I am here to help you make it the best year of your life. Over the next four weeks, I invite you to come with me on a journey to cultivate a positive mindset that clarifies what you truly want for yourself this year. Consider me your very own inspirational mindset mentor to help you reach your full potential. For the first four Mondays in January, I will share tools and insights from

my decade of therapeutic clinical experience. I have helped thousands of clients to live a life in line with their authentic selves, and I want to help you do the same.

If you are looking to make changes this year in your life, either small or significant, it is worth noting that one of the top regrets of the dying was that they did not live a life that was true to themselves but made choices to please other people.

By being true to your own needs, you will organically bring out the best in yourself and you will be a positive influence on those around you. What I teach is not Pollyanna or wishful thinking. I am here to offer you practical and scientifically proven practices from positive psychology, neuroscience and lifestyle medicine to help you be healthier and happier.

You are a proactive agent in your own

change, and my time-efficient tools will help you to gain clarity on who you want to be and what you wish to create in the coming 12 months. My job is to show you the way with love and compassion — you simply have to follow the steps and commit to taking the time for yourself.

The most important relationship you are in is the one with yourself. Change is an inside job.



Taking time to journal and reflect on what you would like to achieve is crucial to your success



'SETTING INTENTIONS IS SO POWERFUL AND IT NEEDS TO BE AT THE HEART OF WHAT YOU DO'

From previous page >

Establish your inner motive

So let's start. The first and most important step is to shift your mindset away from the common and often futile practice of setting goals and making resolutions that end up like Christmas wrapping paper — only to be thrown away, forgotten about, and then recycled the next year. You may have heard the statistic that most people give up on their new year's resolutions by the third week in January, hence the birth of "Blue Monday", the day when apparently we are collectively at our saddest. You can be part of a new cohort of people who are pioneers in sustaining positive habits.

The first and most vital step is to set an overarching internal intention for the year, which will act as a motivational springboard to set external goals that you would like to and will achieve.

The difference between an internal intention and an external goal is significant. An intention is WHY you wish to do something and creates the energy you need to execute the actions needed for an external goal.

For example, a client of mine wanted to get fitter last year. He had joined a gym the previous January and despite paying for membership all year, only used it on a handful of occasions. Work always took priority. When I asked him why he wanted to get fitter, he said he wanted to have a six-pack when he went on his summer holidays. His motivation was weak and he was relying on willpower.

The client had a baby daughter and I asked him, as an avid footballer, if he could imagine coaching a girls' football team that his daughter was a member of. This idea got him very excited. He loved the idea and I helped

him to visualise the future team and their success. Then I said to him, if he was going to be the head coach, he would probably need to be pretty fit himself. And right there was his motivation to use the gym membership. He also started to play five-a-side once a week, something he had not done in years. The motivation behind his intention was now much deeper. He wanted to get fit so that he could maintain a close relationship with his daughter as she grew up.

Every action has an intention, whether you are consciously aware of it or not. I want to help you make sure you see this action through and ensure your intention is in line with your values.

To set your own internal and overarching intention, take some time to journal and/or reflect on the following questions. I strongly urge you to grab a pen and do this now. Don't tell yourself you will do it later — you won't, and this is too important to skip.

Take a deep breath, slow down your mind and answer the following:

Over the next 12 months...

- How do you want to feel when you rise in the morning?
- What kind of energy do you want to have as you go through your day?
- How do you want to feel as you drift to sleep?
- How do you want to make other people feel when they are in your company?
- How can you serve others to the best of your ability?

The answers to these questions become the framework for your overarching intention for 2023.

Clarity is key

To give you an example, my overarching intention is the following:

It is my intention to be positive, energetic, joyful, calm, courageous, and grateful for all I am and all I have. To help

others to build emotional resilience and to believe in their own worth. I will show myself love and kindness so I can be stronger to care for others.

This overall intention becomes a mission statement and the foundation for any external goals that you set. Once you have yours, write it down somewhere you can see it daily. In addition take some of the words — for example, energetic, joyful, and courageous — and use them as prompts to keep you in line with your intention. Put them as words on the screensaver of your phone or post-it notes on your laptop.

Oprah Winfrey states that intention is at the heart of every choice she makes and she sets one just before she does anything important. She encountered the idea of intention in Gary Zukav's best-selling book, *The Seat of the Soul*, and she says it was a life-changing concept for her.

Setting intentions is so powerful and it needs to be at the heart of all that you do. For example, if you have a meeting at work, can you decide how you want to manage a tricky negotiation before you walk into the room? If you are having relationship difficulties, can you decide on what outcome you want before you have a conversation? Being specific is important, and you will notice that your overarching intention is your compass and will always help you to find the best way forward.

Next week we are going to look at how to make subconscious shifts and why willpower doesn't work for habit change. I will also help you to get clarity on specific goals for 2023, using your overarching intention as your springboard for success.

Fiona Brennan is an acclaimed Clinical Hypnotherapist, best-selling author and frequent keynote speaker. For more information on Fiona's books, workshops and other resources, check out thepositivehabit.com