

To Grow as a Conscious Elder Forget Resolutions & Create Intentions

By Ron Pevny

We all know how weak New Years resolutions and other good intentions tend to be for making a lasting, meaningful difference in our lives. I believe this is so because our resolutions are usually made piecemeal, with a goal of improving some areas of our lives, but without a larger context within which to place these improvements. We resolve to lose weight, or improve our diet, or watch less TV – all of which can be positives in our lives – but most of us don't place these in a context that can be large enough and motivating enough to be sustainable. A crucial question for those of us seeking to age consciously is this: "Am I committed to having my strongest values be growth toward the fulfillment of my potential as an elder, or am I merely looking to make some changes that will support me in continuing to be who I have been?" As we approach or move more deeply into our later life chapters, there is a strong call from within to move forward, to embrace a new life stage that wants to emerge in us. Resolutions that don't recognize this inner shift have only the force of our personality behind them; intentions that align with this call carry a power that comes from the depths of ourselves, and are more able to be sustained as we meet the inevitable resistances to change.

I would like to recommend the following practice to help you prepare to live and grow intentionally, if that is truly important to you. It is an adaptation of a practice we share on our Choosing Conscious Elderhood retreats that focuses on the power of intention in shaping our future.

Give yourself some periods of quiet time during which you do your best to quiet your mind and get in touch with your intuitive inner guidance, however you understand that. During these essential quiet times, begin to focus on all the aspects of what makes you who you are and what each of these needs to grow and thrive as you look toward your future. As you do so, gradually begin to identify concrete steps you can take, and are willing to take, that will support each of these aspects of your life as you grow toward wholeness within the next 12 months. Let this process result in several commitments to your growth that you make to yourself and to the spirit in you that calls you toward the wholeness of a conscious elderhood. These intentions don't have to be acted upon all at once, and it's probably best that you don't try to do so. The goal is to have all of them become a reality in your life by this time next year. And they don't all have to be big changes that are likely to be too daunting to sustain. What is important is that they be concrete and tangible steps toward your growth, even if small. Every such step creates the momentum that helps move you forward.

Consider these aspects of your multi-dimensional life as you create your list of intentions for the next year:

- Your need for supportive, healthy relationships

- Your need for good health of body, mind and emotions
- Your need for pleasure and excitement
- Your need for creative expression of your gifts
- Your need to be of service to others
- Your need for a deep connection with your spiritual dimension

As you engage in this process, be aware that there is little power in merely creating lists of intentions. The power of intentionality comes from visualizing your intentions being manifested and in allowing yourself to imagine how you will feel when your intentions become reality. Intentions have great power if they tap the energy of our minds (the list), our imagination (visualization) and our emotions (feeling intentions becoming reality). And when intentions come from our intuitive knowing of what is needed for our growth, rather than just our ideas about what we want, their power is magnified. Also, remember the impact of the words we use on what we actually accomplish. There is no power in stating, “I hope to”, or “I’d like to”. Those are usually empty, meaningless statements. There is much power in declaring “I intend to”, or “I will”, or “I commit to.” And it is even more empowering to have others witness our intentions. Share these with someone who supports the best in you and is willing to help you hold yourself accountable for what you commit to.

You don’t have to be acting on all your intentions at once. Spend time prioritizing them. Be willing to make adjustments, additions or deletions if it feels right. But let these changes be conscious decisions rather than an unconscious drifting away from these expressions of your commitment to your growth.

As you engage this process, imagine how satisfied you will feel in a year when you have taken these important steps along the path of your conscious aging. Yes, you will experience resistance along the way. Yes, you will often go unconscious, living out of habit rather than being present to what can help you truly come alive. And yet, you can begin each day (rather than rushing to check texts and e-mails) with a few quiet minutes committing to living consciously and intentionally. As these days and years add up, conscious aging becomes not so much a goal or set of practices, but rather a lifestyle — the expression of the conscious elder you will have become.

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