

Focusing on What Matters: Values-Based Goal Setting

Overview of Steps

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Step 1: Focus on Values

In order to use our time and resources effectively, we have to know what really matters to us. Step 1 is about honing in on our most meaningful work.

Think about what's most relevant and personally meaningful for your work right now. With this in mind, choose one value that you feel is most important at this moment.

Value	Description
Meaning	Delivering value
Creativity	Being Innovative
Service	Making a difference
Empowerment	Empowering ourselves and/or empowering others
Boldness	Taking risks, starting new paths, ending old ones

After choosing a value, complete the following sentence to create your own goal-based intention. Goal-based intentions are outcome oriented; they are the end product of our efforts.

These intentions are important because they bring more awareness to our end goal and encourage making choices that support it. Daniel Siegel, Clinical Professor of Psychology states, "Intentions create an integrated state of priming, a gearing up of our neural system to be in the mode of that specific intention: we can be readying to receive, to sense, to focus, to behave in a certain manner."

Here is the frame for your goal-based intention.

My time and resources will reflect my value of _____.

It's best if you write this sentence out completely, as an "I" statement, and then share it with at least one other person. You can also post this statement somewhere visible as a daily reminder. All of these techniques encourage the likelihood you will make choices that support your goals.

Step 2: Pause and Reflect

Busyness and distraction can lead to information overload, skewed priorities, and anxiety. In order to enhance our focus on the work that is most meaningful to us we need to pause and reflect on our goal-based intention.

Start by slowing down. Pausing. Taking a breathe. Then, when you are ready, ask yourself the following three questions:

*When did I live out my value today?
When did I not live out my value?
What's one way I want to grow in this value tomorrow?*

Answer the third question as an implementation intention. Implementation intentions are actionable, specific behaviors that are within our personal control. They support our goal-based intention.

Here are some frames you can use.

*I will have a conversation with _____ about _____.
I will set aside _____ minutes to focus on _____ (project/task).
I will limit the resources I spend on _____ to _____ minutes/times a day.*

Here is a completed example.

I will limit the resources I spend on checking email to 4 times daily.

Now, create a plan. When will you pause and reflect? Name when, how, and how often. Here is an example.

I will reflect and pause in writing for 10 minutes before I leave work every day.

Step 3: Hone Discernment

In addition to knowing and reflecting on what matters, we have to make decisions that support our values. This means being purposeful about commitments and setting clear boundaries on our time and resources.

Here are two questions you can use to hone your discernment.

*How does this commitment relate to my value?
Why would I say yes?*

If the answer to the first question is no, then consider why you might say yes. Maybe you have to, but if not, what are other reasons? Is it because you want to be perceived in a certain way? Is it because you want to make someone else happy? Do you want to feel valued? Be very clear on your intentions for the commitment before you answer. Then, practice setting boundaries on time and resources that don't align with your values, even if you are concerned about how you will be perceived. Be clear and honest about why you can't commit at this time.

