



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Our Everyday Spaces



January 2022
Living With Intention

Table of Contents

[The Welcome Mat](#): What Does it Mean to be a Family Living with Intention?

[At the Table](#): Exploring Living with Intention Through Discussion

[Around the Neighborhood](#): Finding Our Way by Living with Intention

[From the Mailbox](#): Love Notes and Special Deliveries about Living with Intention and Anti-Racism from the Wider World: ShikaChica guided meditation, and Black Wall Street lesson pack

[At Play](#): “What are you doing?” and Get Lost!

[On the Message Board](#): “Today I intend to _____”

[At the Bedside](#): The Ruby, retold by Jim May

[On the Porch](#): Raising a Child Living with Intention

[The Extra Mile](#): Chalice suncatchers

[Blessing](#) Living with Intention

The Welcome Mat

What Does it Mean to be a Family Living with Intention?

Several months ago, the journalist and author Malcolm Gladwell interviewed professor and author Ibram X. Kendi on the occasion of the release of Kendi's new podcast, [Be Antiracist](#). In the interview, Gladwell asked Kendi what his intention was with the podcast project. Kendi's response?

To change people's minds.

This struck me as so humbly brilliant, and such a faithful response. Kendi, and Gladwell, believe that people can change, and to the degree that that is possible, they poise themselves to use their skills, talents, and efforts to the greatest effect, guiding and supporting that change in others in a positive and life-affirming direction.

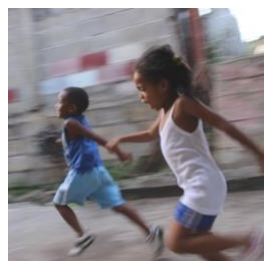
If the way your family lived your lives could change people's minds, what messages would you hope to send? Is your family culture aligned with your values? What would it mean to you to hear from a friend or neighbor that your family's intentionality inspired them toward more integrity?

This framing feels so different from setting goals or making resolutions, the more common forward-looking practices this time of year. So this month, we're going to help one another get clear on our big ideas, play and practice with the action and purpose part of intention, and then follow through together with support.

Where do you intend to start this month? Enter playfully, with an improv game from our At Play section? Tap into the power of story At the Bedside with a (wonderful!) tale of two people and a GIANT ruby? Ease in slowly, with a short, guided meditation in our From the Mailbox section? Wherever you begin, your Soul Matters Sharing Circle is surrounding you with our best intentions, too, that you discover and create what you need for your month to be infused with faith-filled fun and insight!

Much love,

Teresa, on behalf of the Soul Matters team



At the Table

Exploring Living with Intention Through Discussions

At the Table questions explore the monthly theme through a discussion for all ages. They are designed for a family gathering - maybe during a Friday night meal, a quiet moment in the living room or before a board game night.

Introducing the Activity

Family members who are readers can alternate who reads the questions. Those who are not readers are invited to share their own impromptu questions. Discussion partners might answer as thoughts come to them or take turns in a circle.

Discussion Questions

1. Intention is rooted in passion, or as some call it, “the fire in our belly.” So, what fire lies in each of your bellies?
2. Empathy is also important to living with intention. When we are able to empathize with the suffering of others, it activates our intention and our desire to change things. So, what suffering or struggle would you say your family most empathizes with?
3. Intention takes persistence. Just think about [“the little engine that could.”](#) When have you had to keep telling yourself [“I think I can. I think I can.”](#)
4. What’s one habit you have that keeps you from doing what you want to do, or know you need to do? (Parents, here might be a good place to tell on yourself to build some compassion around falling short of our best intentions but connect over your shared resolve to follow through on what you and your child both *want* to do and be!)
5. What intentions do you have about friendships? What new friendships are you intentionally trying to make?
6. What is your intention with your studies this month? Is there one class or subject or project that you really want to succeed in?
7. What do you intend to be when you grow up?
8. When you woke up this morning, what was it that you were most excited to do? What did you intend to do? And did you do it?
9. Tell about a time that you meant for one thing to happen, but an entirely different thing happened, instead.
10. What does your UU church or group intend to do in your community? What’s one thing you might do to help?
11. When you sit down to eat a meal together, what’s your intention for your food? What do you hope it does for your body? (If you don’t have a family tradition of saying grace before meals, a very simple one might be, “May this food nourish our bodies.” Speaking that intention aloud keeps us in mind of our place on the interconnected web of all life.)
12. Did today (or yesterday) turn out like you’d planned? If not, what do you think happened?

Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

Thoughts develop with time. Find opportunities to bring up particularly compelling questions again during the month, maybe on walks, rides home, when tucking your child into bed, etc. If thoughts grew or changed, notice together how we are all evolving beings, opening ourselves to new truths and understandings as we live our lives and connect with others.



Around the Neighborhood

Around the Neighborhood activities engage families with their surroundings through the lens of the theme. It's about perceiving our well-known world in new ways. As you safely move around your neighborhood during this time of Covid, these suggestions help you transform your everyday backs-and-forths into a family adventure!

Finding Our Way by Living with Intention

This month's exploration goes hand in hand with one of the games in our At Play section. After you've gotten lost on purpose (our Option B on the next page), you'll be in the right frame of mind for this activity!

You'll probably use cell phones for this activity, but you could also use walkie-talkies.

Find a big, public space such as a park, a downtown square, or somewhere else where you can spread out. Working in teams (so bring a couple of friends if you are a family of two!), one team is going to hide somewhere in the big, public area, and then is going to text clues about their whereabouts to the other team, who will try and find them.

You can be as cryptic or creative as you want with your clues. Maybe you could give one clue every five minutes (maybe a little more or less, depending on your circumstances) until you're found. When the teams reunite, the roles switch.

Our aim in this "hunt" is twofold. First, we are trying to connect to our loved ones; we're literally leading them to us! But, in being creative with our clues, we might take on different perspectives, imagining, for example, how our location might look from a grasshopper or a bird's perspective. Doubtless, we're looking more closely at the place that we're in and connecting more deeply on every level.

We participate in the communities and ecosystems of our neighborhoods and surroundings consciously, intentionally. Activities such as this one can freshen the way we think about--and act--in our special places.



From the Mailbox

Our literal mailboxes connect us to the wide world outside, sometimes with messages asking things from us (a donation letter or flyer encouraging us to vote), sometimes with messages offering us gifts (a letter from a friend or a special delivery). Our "From the Mailbox" section applies this metaphor to today's call for families to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy culture. Together each month, as a Soulful Home community, we open and accept these "invitations" to join some of the many brave, inspiring and wise leaders and organizations who are co-creating a future that is actively anti-racist.

Guided meditation for setting intentions

We've shared guided meditations before, because this is a powerful, take-anywhere tool that we can use to care for ourselves as we are doing the shared work of dismantling white supremacy culture. What's special about this 10-minute meditation is that it uses tried-and-true relaxation and mindfulness techniques to help set up the setting of one, single intention (just before minute 5:00), and then uses the second half of the meditation to contextualize that intention with gratitude for what we already have, do, and are.

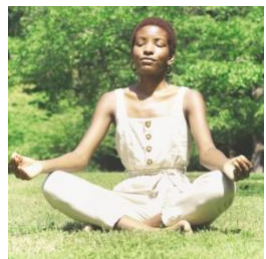
How many days this month are you willing to dedicate to re-setting your own psychology and nervous system, in service of being more present for the work that is ours to do? Could you commit to once a week? Twice? Daily?

Find the guided meditation, from Canadian meditation teacher Shika Chica, [here](#).

Black Wall Street: Intention to Support One's Community

Part of what made the Black Wall Street district in the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, Oklahoma so successful at the turn of the last century was that the residents of that area *set the intention of supporting one another's businesses*, keeping their wealth (money wealth, and social-connection wealth) in their communities. This was partly because the Black residents were forbidden, by Jim Crow laws, from shopping other places, but it was also because the Black community was investing in its own people in order to share the success. It worked, and the community was so successful that it drew the resentment of white supremacists in Tulsa who, on May 31, 1921, became a mob and burned the community down. It's a shameful story in American history, but also a tale of resilience as the community members who stayed rebuilt their homes and businesses and fought for the story of the atrocity to be told.

This month, buy [this \\$5 lesson](#) about Black Wall Street from the site, teacherspayteachers.com, and engage your family in this important story.



At Play

Playing Games with Living with Intention

At Play activities and questions are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme.

Option A: Do what I say, not what I do!

This is a favorite game for generating good energy and breaking the ice in groups. But it also works well to infuse a little bit of fun into your family life, too.

The game draws on charades, but cooperatively and with a little cognitive dissonance for a twist--you'll tell the other players that you're doing something entirely different from what you intend to communicate with your movements, and then one of them has to take it from there!

Improv game, What are you doing? <https://www.dramanotebook.com/drama-games/what-are-you-doing/>

Option B: Get lost!

Have you ever gotten lost on purpose? Driven to a new part of town just to wander around, or explored a part of the park you didn't know well, trusting that you'd be able to make your way back to someplace familiar eventually? It's a wonderful thing to do, something between a game and a spiritual practice. As we play with intention this month, how about releasing all intention for a little while, and wandering, aimless and spontaneous, to experience an hour or two of *unintentionally*?



On the Message Board

A Monthly Reminder

The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra, graphic, quote, or gesture for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” or “family signs” as tools for the journey, reminders that help us refocus and steady ourselves and our kids as we navigate through life’s challenges and opportunities.

January’s Mantra/Daily Practice:

Today, I intend to _____.

This month’s practice begins each day--maybe even before you fully open your eyes--with an intention of your choosing. By doing this, you’ll learn to understand how your own thoughts and feelings influence your perception of reality, and can harness this self-knowledge to create more love, joy, and justice in your world.

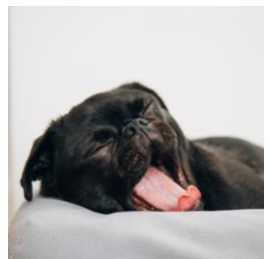
Here’s an example. Maybe on a Monday, at the start of the week, you would say to yourself, “Today, I intend to be open to what comes.” You might even write it on a sticky note to affix to a notebook, or mirror in your home, or set the sentence as a reminder on your phone around mid-day.

Maybe Tuesday, the day of a project deadline, you’d say, “Today, I intend to finish what I started.”

Now, one nice thing about framing these statements as intentions rather than describing realities-in-progress (as if often the case with affirmations--“I am” statements rather than “I intend”) is that if you find yourself veering from what you said you’d be that day, there’s no sense of failure or cognitive dissonance. You simply remind yourself of your intention and bring yourself mindfully back toward your purpose.

Doing this all month might seem like a big commitment. Try it instead for one week, and if you like how it works for you, keep it up!

And, if you’d like to boost the power of this month’s mantra, pair it with the guided meditation linked in our From the Mailbox section.



At the Bedside

At The Bedside activities engage the theme through storytelling. This takes place during the dreamy, almost otherworldly hour or so before children or youth drift off to sleep. Through stories and the questions and realizations that they prompt, we come to understand the nature of and our own place in the cosmos. But also, these selections invite you to remember, shape, and share stories from your own past, using thoughtful narratives to help your child weave the tale of who they are and whose they are.

Intention to Know True Riches:

The Ruby

The Ruby is the best wisdom tale you've maybe never heard; it is a powerful story that resonates strongly in our age of inexcusable income inequality, as well as toxic consumerism, but in a way that refocuses us on the larger issue of personal, interpersonal, and ecological peacefulness.

The story appears on the Internet [here](#), but it's also printed in the book [More Ready-to-Tell Tales from Around the World](#), retold by storyteller Jim May, who refers to it as "a parable from the Hindu tradition."

For Discussion:

- What did you think when the poor man returned to ruby to the older man?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about money?
- Does wealth equal happiness?
- Parents, ahead of time, think of a story from your own youth when money had nothing to do with the joy you experienced. What did you learn from that moment?



On the Porch

Raising a Child Living with Intention Together

On the Porch supports sharing realizations, challenges and hopes around the theme with other supportive adults. Perhaps this happens on a literal porch or front stoop, but it could happen wherever parents and their circle of support gather and talk (online or in person) over the soulful parts of parenthood. The “A Sip of Something New” section invites you and your discussion partner to take in a new idea shared by someone else. The “Spiritual Snacks” section stimulates personal storytelling and the sharing of your own wisdom and experience.

A Sip of Something New

This activity, adapted from our Soul Matters small group packet, is so good it might become a tradition for you and your loved one, trusted friend, or partner. If your circumstances lend themselves to small group gathering, you might even pitch this out to a few, chosen folks in your social circle.

For each person in the conversation, print a copy of [this document](#), a series of incomplete sentences that aim to help one identify and explore personal intentions. Don't read all the sentences before beginning--they work best if encountered fresh, so that you're less crafting your answers than discovering them.

When you gather, take five or ten minutes to fill out your answers individually. Then, choose two or three to share with one another. As you do so, you might describe

- what surprised you in this exercise,
- which sentences held the most energy,
- which answers you'd change on second or third thought,
- and what one intention you'd set after completing this.



Spiritual Snacks to Share

Bring these questions with you when the time comes to hang out with your co-parent or buddies. Don't treat the questions as a list to go through one by one. Instead pick the one or two that speak to you the most. Treat the questions less as a quiz and more like doorways inviting you into the world of storytelling and memory.

Questions

1. What are you most likely to assume about someone's intentions, that they are benevolent, malevolent, or something in between? How does that worldview serve you?
2. Is "fake it until you make it" a strategy you use in difficult or uncomfortable situations? Why or why not?
3. At what point in your life were you not free to set your own intentions, more likely to follow the life plan that others set for you? What feelings come up when you revisit that moment?
4. When you were younger, who modeled authentic living for you, living as if their intentions and actions were in resonance?
5. Would you rather proceed through the day with an idea of where you want to be, or be completely free to encounter whatever might come up? How do you strike that balance for yourself?
6. Which of your intentions (or goals, or plans, or even dreams) no longer sparks for you, no longer ignites feelings of passion and drive? What would it take for you to release that former intention and open up some space for what might come next?
7. Keeping number 3, above, in mind, what intentions do you have for your child? And what intentions do they have for themselves?



The Extra Mile

The Extra Mile section is for families who want to continue exploring the theme of the month through larger adventures, more complex projects or simply through additional modalities not otherwise included in the packets. The Extra Mile suggestions often surpass what is considered an “everyday moment” in a family, and may involve more preparation, planning, or time to accomplish. A bit more effort, but well worth it!

Reminders of Our Intentions

We want our faith to inspire us toward higher intentions, toward living with more integrity. One way that we can amplify this role of religion is to bring reminders into our homes. What in your home reminds you that you’re a Unitarian Universalist, and that your faith community helps you to live with intention? Last fall, we made chalices together--a favorite and worthy project! --and this month, we’ll be making chalice suncatchers.

You’ll need a package of colorful tissue paper, or for more saturated color, kite paper.

Cut out chalice shapes and flame shapes, and using a loop of cellophane tape, affix them to windows around your home, or maybe in your car. You can experiment with sizes and shapes, as well as layering colors for cool effects.

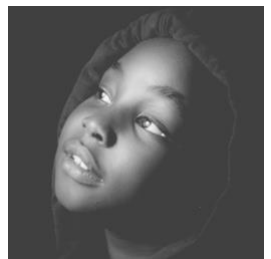
Plan this activity after answering some of your At the Table questions, especially number 10, which asks us to consider the ways that our faith holds out intentions for us. Let the suncatchers remind you, room to room (to car!) this month, of the hopes, dreams, and promises of our shared faith.

In many locales, moisture accumulation on the windows and direct sun will distort your suncatcher chalices eventually, but they’ll likely last the whole month.



Blessing of Living with Intention

Blessed are our best efforts, family of faith. They are infused with our care and hopefulness and lived experiences up to this very moment. We bless our best efforts, but we do not let ourselves get trapped by identifying with them. Instead, may we intend to keep growing and learning together, to allow ourselves to be led closer and closer to the side of love, to live as if peace, justice, and compassion are within reach. Blessed is our intention--may it be so.



Connect with more Inspiration for your family, and for you!

Parents can Join our Facebook and Instagram pages for
daily inspiration on our themes:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/?ref=settings>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/soul_matters_circle/

Parents and youth will want to check out our music playlists on the monthly themes.

One playlist is one [Spotify](#) and another on our [YouTube](#) channel

Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by
Teresa Youngblood,
Our Soul Matters [Family Ministry Coordinator](#)

*You are free to use any of this material verbatim in worship, newsletters
or similar contexts, with attribute to Teresa Youngblood.*

*Soul Matters receives no financial benefit from any linked
or recommended products, and seeks especially to promote
fair compensation for work by people from marginalized identities.*



Soul Matters

© 2021-2022 Soul Matters ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

***Packets are for use only by member congregations of and individual subscribers
to the Soul Matters Sharing Circle.***

Learn more about subscribing
to these monthly resource packets on our website:
<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/soulful-home.html>