

Intention Setting Guide, Beta Edition

(i.e. I've never done this before, so don't hold it against me if you hate it...)

Note: This guide is based on the Five Phases (also called the Five Elements) of Chinese medicine. These are: Water, Wood, Fire, Earth, & Metal.

For the purposes of this guide, each of these phases correlates to a specific arena of life, extrapolated out from the symbolic meaning behind each of the phases in accordance with Chinese medical theory. An understanding of Chinese medicine is NOT required for using this guide. It simply provides the framework for setting intentions across different arenas of life.

These arenas, as I've defined them, are listed below. There are two aspects (yin-ish and yang-ish in nature) associated with each phase. You can focus on whichever aspect feels more resonant now. Or both, if you're feeling particularly inspired.

WATER: Creativity &/or Sexuality

WOOD: Career &/or Work

FIRE: Relationships &/or Community

EARTH: Emotional &/or Physical Nourishment

METAL: Spirituality &/or Woo

For each of these arenas, do the following:

APPLAUD — Toot your own horn

What hard things have you done this past year? What have you tried and/or accomplished that would surprise the 2016 version of you? (Name at least 3 things. AT LEAST. But I know you can name more than that. Celebrate yourself, yo.)

ABSOLVE — Let yourself off the hook

What do you want to stop doing or do differently next year? What can you forgive yourself for not doing perfectly this year? (This can be specific actions or behaviors, or it can be patterns of thinking and believing. One or two per arena is plenty. There may even be crossover between them.)

ASPIRE — Give yourself a gentle nudge forward

What do you want to create or accomplish this year? How do you want to feel? (This can include specific outcome-based goals, though I recommend focusing mostly on feeling states. I also recommend keeping this section to around 3-5 answers per arena. I picked one or two feelings I wanted to cultivate and one specific goal for each arena.)

Next, for each arena, pick one action (two, if you're feeling extra jazzed) you can take that will lead you in the direction of the things you want to accomplish or the feeling you want to cultivate. Something you can do that will push you outside your comfort zone, but not so far you can't follow through.

For example, one of my intentions for the Metal/Spirituality arena is to feel more aligned. My tangible action for cultivating this feeling is to meditate for at least 10 minutes a day, every day.

Another example: In the Water/Creativity arena, I want to cultivate flow and feel like I am of service. My tangible action towards this is to continue my daily writing practice with the caveat of sharing something I'm scared to share publicly (on social media or otherwise) at least once a week. (So, get ready for some rusty poetry-writing skillz to potentially be put on display, folks.)

After 1-3 months (or 30-90 days) of implementing these five (or more) new tangible actions, reevaluate. If the actions you've chosen are working for you, great! Keep them! If they suck and you hate them, great! Ditch 'em and replace them with something different. The point is that you're not locked into these intentions for the next twelve months. This is just a jumping off point, kids.

Lastly, if you feel so inclined, you can write down the things you want to stop doing or let go of or for which you want to forgive yourself, and then burn them. I usually write these down on individual strips of paper so that I can burn them one-by-one. There's something ridiculously satisfying about this ritual, I find.

EXTRA CREDIT:

Another thing I started doing a few years ago was picking a word that would anchor the rest of my intentions and goals for the new year. Last year it was COLLABORATION— which I pretty much nailed, I'd say. The year before it was BOUNDARIES. Which was good and hard and necessary. This year? I'm going with TRUST. Because I'm someone who likes to control all the

things. And I'm pretty much ready to stop pretending that's possible. This is gonna be interesting, you guys.

That's it! I hope this guide is helpful for anyone who decides to use all or part of it. If you do, I'd love to hear what you think. Are there things about it you loved? Things you hated? Things that could use a little tweaking? Let me know! Maybe I'll update it and share it again next year. :)

Happy New Year, y'all!