

What Gets in the Way of Your Best Intentions as a Parent?

1/11/23

Sarah here. We hope you enjoyed last week's blog on parenting with intention. Hopefully, you've been able to put intention into action. Last week, Lisa talked about roadblocks that can make parenting with intention more difficult. This week, we're going to continue focusing on some of things that get in the way of your best efforts to be intentional as a parent.

Parenting with intention isn't a one-and-done act. It isn't an accomplishment that you can complete and check off a list. Instead, parenting with intention is like meditation- it's an ongoing practice that you can always do more or less of. Because of this, the roadblocks to parenting with intention may be dynamic over time and across situations.



We want you to engage in a little practical self-reflection. Read through the questions that follow and notice what thoughts come to mind after you read each question. Focus on the present and recent past when reflecting. If you'd like, you can jot down your answers, but no pressure. Remember there are no right or wrong answers.

- Are there things about how you *feel* that have gotten in the way of you parenting with intention?

- Consider thoughts, beliefs, feelings, memories, physical sensations, energy level, and overall health and wellness.
- Are there things about your *self-care* (how you are or aren't taking care of yourself) that have gotten in the way of you parenting with intention?
 - Consider things including your daily schedule, sleep routine, eating habits, activity level, hygiene, spiritual activities, personal hobbies/interests, social engagement, and household maintenance.
- Are there things about your *environment* that have gotten in the way of you parenting with intention?
 - Consider your physical environment, including your space at home, degree of household clutter, seasonal/holiday demands on physical space (e.g., decorated Christmas tree still taking up space in the living room), and feasibility of using indoor and outdoor space at present (given the weather, time change, etc.).
- Are there things about your *co-parent* that have gotten in the way of you parenting with intention?
 - Among other things, consider your co-parent's parenting style, their own commitment (or lack of commitment) to parenting with intention, areas of disagreement between you and your co-parent (e.g., situations in which you would handle things differently), current interpersonal dynamics between you and your co-parent.
- Finally, can you think of any other *external (outside of yourself) or internal (within yourself) barriers* to you parenting with intention?
 - You may consider work demands, schedule constraints, attitudes or behaviors of extended family or friends, the presence of other people at home (e.g., your child's friends regularly coming to your house, your sister and her child visiting for a week, etc.) or anything else that has impacted your ability to parent with intention.

So, now that you've reflected on possible roadblocks to parenting with intention, what do you do? That depends. In some cases, *how* you intentionally parent may need to adapt. For

example, if your intention was to spend time outdoors together as a family but there's a blizzard outside, then adapting your intentional action makes sense! Perhaps you could spend some purposeful time together as a family *indoors*. If your self-care is abysmal right now and you can't even fathom being intentional because you're so sleep deprived, then prioritizing sleep and self-care *now* is the intentional action that will allow you to intentionally engage with your family *later*.

Remember that roadblocks aren't a sign to quit- they're just a sign that we need to do something different. By periodically doing this intentional parenting self-reflection, you'll be able to identify and address barriers and avoid stalling out. And, incorporating this type of self-reflection into your parenting practice *is itself* a great way to be intentional as a parent.

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If you're trying to achieve, there will be roadblocks. I've had them; everybody has had them. But obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.

Michael Jordan

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