

Get off autopilot and start living intentionally.



Christmas is over and thankfully, so is 2020. As we hunker down for the long winter, we anticipate that 2021 will bring an end to Covid-19 restrictions and a return to normalcy. The year of limited activity and minimal connection with others has caused many of us to reflect on what is truly important. We realize we took for granted the activities that bring us joy and the importance of connection with others.

Covid-19 has given us the opportunity to reflect on our lives and to assess what really matters. Although it may still be a while until things truly return to normal, we can begin applying the lessons learned during this year of restrictions. We can begin living our lives with greater intention, purposefully choosing to engage in activities that matter most to us. We can fully engage in our lives and show appreciation for all we have and those we love.

Before the pandemic hit, many of us found ourselves on autopilot, going through the motions and letting external events and other people's demands control our day.

The pandemic and quick lock-down gave many of us a pause, however brief. We had a moment to look at our lives and reflect on how quickly everything changed. We noticed what we were happy to give up, and what we hated to give up. For a brief time, we were knocked out of autopilot.

We all want to live our lives with intention, to set goals and follow through with them. Yet, it's easy to get sidetracked, caught up in the mundane tasks that fill up our days. But as we reset in 2021, we can choose to live our lives with greater intention. We can direct the course of our lives and live in a manner that truly reflects our wants, needs, goals and desires.

One sign that you're on autopilot is that life has become too predictable. You go through your day not really giving much thought to the tasks ahead of you. You feel tired and unmotivated. You don't set goals, or if you do, you never seem to reach them.

With the onset of Covid-19, and its unpredictability, we were all thrown out of autopilot. We became aware of our surroundings and our senses became heightened. We paid attention. We noticed what mattered.

We may even have welcomed some aspects of

COVID, working from home or stepping back from a busy social life.

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to reclaim control over what is important to us. We can avoid slipping back into autopilot by accessing our priorities to see if our activities reflect our priorities. We can make a commitment to ensure that our activities reflect what matters most to us. We can live with intention by setting goals for ourselves and being purposeful in what we want to accomplish.

Living a life with intention requires focus and sustained effort. It demands that we pay attention to what is happening in the moment. It means tuning into our own emotions and internal world. It means being tuned into the emotions and experiences of others. The greatest roadblock to living with intention is getting bogged down by the past and worrying unnecessarily about the future. Living with intention means engaging fully in your life today.

Joy can only be experienced in the here and now. To find joy and peace we must cultivate the art of living in the moment. Mindfulness is the skill of letting go of negative thoughts about the past and fear of the future so we can fully appreciate our lives today. It involves letting go of judgmental thoughts about ourselves and others so that we can be fully present in what's happening around us.

Mindfulness is a skill that takes practice and sustained effort. It's something we learn and then practise on a daily basis.

This medical crisis has given us an opportunity to reflect on our lives and to set our intentions moving forward. It knocked us out of autopilot and forced us to notice what was going on in our lives and in the lives of others. We can choose to move forward with greater intention or we can slip back into autopilot.

We all want a life with greater intention, we just might not know how to do it. You can learn more about living with intention and mindfulness living through your own exploration or you can reach out to your Employee and Family and Assistance Program provider. Let's make 2021 a year to remember for all the good that came from it.

Jenny DeReis, MC Psych



Being there matters.