

Welcoming 2016: Intentions for your Soul

The last three weeks I have shared some intentions to consider for 2016 that will guide you to your true self. Accessing your true self is the necessary step to lead an authentic life, one in which you achieve all you were destined to achieve. You will get there by loving and nurturing your physical body, your mind, and your soul.

Today, during these final days of 2015, I would like to get you thinking about your soul. For many this can be a well ignored part of our being. Caring for our soul seems to fall well beyond the bottom of the proverbial “self improvement to do” list. After a period of choosing to ignore that bit of self care, you can be sure your soul will alert you to the fact that it is not being fed. Here are some easy-to-spot signs of a malnourished soul:

- day to day activities feel dry and meaningless
- everything you do feels exhausting
- you question your purpose in being and who you really are
- you experience a lack of compassionate and/or connection to those around you

These are all signs of a hungry soul. So what is food for the soul? Truthfully it can be anything that connects you to one of the following:

Nature



Finding our true, authentic self takes time spent in true, authentic environments. Sadly the majority of our day is spent in contrived environments. Trust me that is not where you will tap into your soul. Nature is THE authentic environment and there is no substitute. It is the only antidote to hours and hours spent in virtual worlds. Spending time in nature shouldn't cost you anything but time and the reward is boundless.

- Discover or create for yourself a nature escape from your office or work space where you can sit and listen to the birds sing and the leaves rustle and watch the shift of seasons on a daily basis.
- Schedule a weekly nature fix to one of our nearby state parks or nature preserves for a long walk or situate yourself in one place to observe all the beauty around you.
- Sit outside each evening, under the stars whatever the time of year and marvel at all the sky beholds.

Creative Time



Making/Creating with our hands is one activity that actually connects our physical body and mental body to our soul. Thankfully “making” has come into a renaissance period and opportunities abound. Don’t save it for your retirement or wait to design a “craft room.” You need this activity **now** to feed your soul. Chances are, you have everything required to begin a maker project immediately. Whether you are making music, making food, writing, cultivating a garden, or sketching a still life, doing so brings you into the present moment and connects you to your true self.

- Set aside time each weekend for a project that allows you to work with your hands. Start with something you already know how to do and for which you have what you need so you don’t get caught up in the preparations rather than the act of making.
- Once you achieve that, try incorporating small

activities that you can do each day with your hands. Think small... Even chopping and assembling a salad is working with your hands or challenge yourself to a doodle a day in a blank journal.

Play



What does play look like to you? You can discover that by bringing to the surface memories of what gave you joy as a child. What activities could you literally lose yourself in, unaware of time and place and only experiencing the joy of the moment. Maybe it was throwing stones for hours into a lake, cuddling with a favorite pet, or riding your bike into the wind. Take some time with this and consider how you felt about yourself in those moments. What might you borrow from these early days that you could integrate into your life today? What steps would you need to take to make space for that activity?

- Schedule a play date for yourself this weekend. Set aside the time needed and honor your commitment to yourself to just play.

So now aren't you excited to get started? I say bring on the New Year and let's all take these courageous steps towards our

true self together!

Let me leave you with the quote that I began this series with as it truly encompasses all you need to prepare for this glorious New Year that stretches ahead:

*“At the center of your being
you have the answer;
you know who you are
and you know what you want.”*

~ Lao Tzu ~

Lauren's Kitchen: A Simple Soup of Lentils



Here's a wonderful way to keep your time in the kitchen to a minimum AND have a delicious bowl of goodness to serve up for your evening meal. I first learned to cook lentils from a dear Italian friend during my early days in Europe and I made her recipe for years. Then, several years later, my method was influenced by the version prepared by my German mother-in-law. What you'll find here today is a delightful hybrid that is a Hubele family standby, so simple you will want to add it to your weeknight rotation.

Ingredients:

2 heaping tablespoons of coconut oil, olive oil or ghee
 $\frac{1}{2}$ large onion or 2 leeks, peeled and finely chopped by hand or in the food processor
 $\frac{1}{2}$ celeriac root, peeled and finely chopped by hand or in the food processor
3 large carrots, peeled and finely chopped by hand or in the food processor
1 sweet red pepper, finely chopped by hand or in the food processor
1 bay leaf
1 T of Herbes de Provence
3 cups of brown lentils (Check out this guide to lentils)
Water, enough to cover by 2-3 inches
2 vegetable bouillon cubes
Salt and pepper to taste
Optional: GF penne or other shape pasta to ladle the soup over

In large heavy pot or pressure cooker, melt oil and add chopped vegetables one at a time, giving each some time to brown. Once the vegetables have cooked briefly, add the bay leaf, Herbes de Provence, and brown lentils. Cover with water. Increase heat to bring to a boil then reduce to simmer and cover. If using a pressure cooker, follow the manufacturer's instructions, cooking lentils for 15-20 minutes. If using a traditional pot, cook for 30 minutes until tender but still holding their shape. Now add more water if desired, bouillon

cubes, and salt and pepper to taste. Because my son Sebastian learned to love his Oma's soup ladled over freshly made spaetzle, he would recommend putting a heaping spoonful of gluten free pasta into your soup bowl first. But, with or without the noodles, this is delightful.

Enjoy!

Welcoming 2016: Intentions for your Mind



As 2016 moves closer in, we can all benefit from a few moments of quiet reflection considering how to deepen the connection to our true self. That connection only occurs by doing activities that nurture your body, your mind, and/or your

soul. What positive activities could you consider adding that will do just that next year?

I have set aside these last weeks of December to offer some personal thoughts and suggestions. Last week I shared ideas to better care for your body in 2016. Today I'd like to touch upon what your mind might appreciate in the New Year.

While we all do a lot of THINKING we don't often consider the impact those thoughts have on our physical and emotional bodies. What are you feeding your mind these days? That's an interesting question. Everything we take in visually and everything we hear audibly feeds our minds. So what are you spending time looking at? What are you reading? What are you listening to? Who are you listening to?

Take some time today to consider these questions. I know I spend much more time than I would like looking at a computer screen rather than at the beauty just outside my window. I spend more time reading about the hate and struggles in the world than the love that exists because that is what fills news and social media. And surely I listen far too much to my own thought process than the beautiful words of wisdom from a variety of spiritual sources.

What we feed our mind can affect the very health of our cells in the same manner as what we feed our physical bodies. That is a pretty powerful statement, but it is true. Consider that beautiful organic smoothie you just consumed and then what good effects might be negated by tuning into a mainstream news source. Just think about how your body reacts to the negativity and the stress responses that occur subconsciously. So, may I suggest we deepen our awareness of this and consider some of the following ideas to nourish your mind and guide you closer to your authentic self:

Meditation

While there are countless great teachers of meditation, Deepak

and Oprah no doubt offer some of the most accessible guides today to train remotely. They seasonally offer a Free 21 Day Series that can be later purchased for download. Here is the current collection. If you happen to be in Austin, there is no better option than Kelly Lindsey's Wednesday morning series at Dharma Yoga. The next series begins January 6th.

Talks

While you may not be able to control the time you sit in traffic or waiting for a delayed flight, being prepared with some positive teachings will absolutely shift any negative thoughts that may arise. Sounds True offers an incredible selection of audio talks by some of today's most gifted spiritual teachers. Choose a few to download and give your mind a real treat.

Writing

Whether it is journaling or creating the next NYT bestseller, the writing process is a beautiful gift to your mind. You may find that the morning pages prescribed in Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* speaks to you or possibly you would like a more guidance, as in *The Dharma of Writing* course by Susan Piver.

Learning a new skill

There are many ways to learn a new skill today but one source I am particularly fond of is Skillshare. Currently they are offering a promotion of 3 months of unlimited classes for 99 cents. Now that is a deal! Skillshare offers creative minds fantastic training in a wide variety of subjects with project based courses at less than an hour in length. Expand your skill set and foster your creative side in 2016.

Join me next week, just days away from the New Year, when I will return with some final thoughts on caring for your soul in 2016.

Lauren's Kitchen: My Chai

Way back when I used to serve this luscious tea every morning in my office. Times have changed by the tried and true recipe remains the same. I hope it warms you from head to toe.

Ingredients:

Fresh Organic Ginger Root

Whole Organic Spices: Star of Anise, Black Pepper Corns, Cardamom Pods, Cloves, Stick of Cinnamon

Organic Loose Tea (1 heaping T) or Tea Bags (2): Darjeeling or Sencha (with caffeine) / Tulsi or Rooibos (without caffeine)

Local Honey

Unsweetened Organic Plant Based Milk

In a 3 quart pan add the following amounts:

6-8 thin slices from the unpeeled Ginger Root

1 Star of Anise or 1/2 tea of Anise seeds

6 Black Pepper Corns

8 Cardamom Pods

10 Cloves

1 Stick of Cinnamon

2.5 quarts of water

Bring the water to boil, reduce heat to low, cover pan and simmer a minimum of 20 minutes. Return to boil again, add plant based milk and tea, turn off heat and let set for tea to brew 5-10 minutes depending on your choice of tea.

Black Tea: 5-7 minutes

Green Tea: 5 minutes

Tulsi or Rooibos: 10 minutes

Strain tea and spices out with a mesh sieve and add honey to

taste. If storing, pour into glass jars, cool on the counter before placing in the refrigerator. I use nearly a 1 to 1 ratio of milk to tea. I favor using a blend of half almond and half coconut milk. Each type of plant-based milk will lend a different quality, so test out a few to determine your preference. I also favor Tulsi tea because of its medicinal qualities but feel free to experiment and find your own favorite. Enjoy!

Welcoming 2016: Intentions for Your Body–Food, Movement and Sleep

*We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.*

–Aristotle

Last week I made the suggestion that in the weeks leading up to 2016 you consider some intentions for your Body, Mind and Soul that will lead to the discovery of your true self. But who is that true self? That self is who you were born to be, that self is who can put into motion all the good will you are destined to deliver. Our true self does not get stuck, tangled up in stories, make excuses, or need to rationalize. Our true self is the purest love deep within us that we were born with, but due to life experiences, we often lose the connection.

It is my belief that by tending to the needs and nurturing our body, mind and soul we will have a greater access to our true self. This happens through love. Love for yourself begets love

and that is when you can achieve your destiny.

So what might an intention to tend to your body look like? That answer will be quite different for each person depending on current lifestyle but all intentions will be those that promote your health and well being. So what does a body need to thrive? A body needs food, movement, and sleep. Here are some thoughts on each of those topics:

Food



What we put in our mouths each meal, each day can be the greatest gift you give your body. Gifting yourself with whole, fresh organic fruits and vegetables is how you can thank your body for all it gives to you throughout the day from your first breath in the morning to your last stretch before bed.

What one intention can you set in order to feed your body in such a way to promote your health and wellbeing and reach your true self? Will that intention be to omit a food that is not serving you or possibly will it be to add certain foods? Whichever you choose, set your intention in the purpose of your higher good. When you work within that framework, you can steer clear of shaming yourself and rationalizing your cravings.

So, consider and then articulate your intention regarding food for 2016 and do what you need to do now to pave the way.

Movement



Our body was actually designed to move long distances in a day. The way we live today is so very far from that that we are forced to insert "exercise" into our daily routine. Each summer when I spend the month in Germany I get a first hand

glimpse of how we used to use our bodies as I watch my 80 year old mother-in-law and her peers go about their day. These 80-90 years old people each tend their own vegetable garden, watering it twice daily with a with a watering can they carry back and forth from their rain collection system, hoeing and weeding as needed, they wash their clothing in the basement and carry it upstairs out to lines that hang outdoors, they walk to the market and back as needed, and after their afternoon meal they take a walk in the nearby forest. Most can still drive but they only use their cars when they leave town, some who even do so to care for their still living parents! These folks are continually sending the message to their brain that they are active beings. Because they are!

That's not a lifestyle most of us can match, however, you can commit to specific daily movements that will stretch and build muscles, move lymphatic fluids, provide some aerobic exercise, and remind your body on a daily basis you intend to keep moving! What that movement will look like will vary greatly for each of us from gentle yoga poses, to aqua aerobics, to dance. What movement/s do you love? This is important because therein lies the difference between forcing vs. nurturing. Work out of a place of love. Choose a movement that gives you joy and then give it a place of honor in your day. I personally am a big fan of loving yourself first each morning before heading into your day.

Sleep



Nothing can make up for or replace the rejuvenation our body gains from sleep. Yet, when under pressure, it is the first thing we offer up at a time when just the opposite should be true.

When we are rested we are loving and kind, not only to others but to ourselves. We have the bandwidth to forgive and be

gentle.

I believe the more sleep deprived we are, the more we begin to operate on automatic and lose any sense of being mindful and present. I spent a few years extremely sleep deprived and not only did I struggle with depression in that time period but I also have few memories. A clear indication I was not even present for my own life.

In 2016, make a full night's sleep a priority. Consider an intention that is sustainable given your responsibilities and clear the way to make it a reality.

Consider your body this upcoming week and the specific intentions you will set to honor and love yourself in 2016. Next week I'll share a bit about your mind and the importance of taking responsibility for what you are feeding yours on a daily basis.

**Welcoming 2016: Set Your
Intention to Be More YOU!**



**At the center of your being
you have the answer;
you know who you are
and you know what you want.**

– Lao Tzu

What if you welcomed the New Year with a quest to deepen your relationship with yourself? Just imagine where you might be next year at this time. Over these final weeks of 2015 I'm going to offer up some thoughts on how you might begin a year of discovery that can only lead to self love and compassion.

Just imagine the incredible ripple effect that you would have on those you love and care for, those lives you touch through your profession and those you interact with as you go about your daily life.

The truth is that this is really why we are all here. Our first work is the actual stripping away of all the layers of

who we are not, right down to our very essence of who we are, so we can get on with the good stuff!

So let's do it! Discover this divinely created, perfectly lovable, inner self in 2016 by preparing your body, mind and soul to live the life you were born to live. Join me the next three weeks as I share suggested intentions to prepare your body, then your mind and finally your soul for the incredible journey ahead in the New Year.