

Make One Resolution – Live Intentionally

We want to lose weight, to exercise, run a 5K, a half marathon. We want to wake up earlier, go to bed earlier, get more sleep. We want to eat healthier, cut down on fast food, discover delicious recipes that even the kids will love.

We want to stop smoking, or drinking, or binge eating. We want to get a promotion, make more money, get noticed because of our amazing talents. We want to spend less, save money, and erase our debt. We want to limit our screen time and spend more quality time with the people we love. We want to pray more, read our Bible every day. We want to finally pursue our dreams and passions: this, this is our year!

And too soon our **resolutions** remind us of how easy it is to fail and feel broken.

I have three young girls, and two of them have special needs. I often feel as if I am surviving rather than living. The last thing I need to do is add an unreasonable list of more things to. I have limits, and I'm not afraid to embrace those limits.

I need to stop surviving and start living. So I say forget it, the only resolution you and I might need is to live **intentionally**.

Almost five years ago, I had only two kids, they were three and one years old, yet, I was struggling to keep up with life, and I felt embarrassed when therapists came to work with my youngest daughter. At a MOPS meeting, our speaker (Staci Yoder) talked about living intentionally, and how adding charts and routines had changed her life.

I was skeptical, but she shared a story I intimately related to. Like 6:00 pm and still not knowing what's for dinner, having no clean underwear, dishes so dirty some of them are easier to trash, a messy home and the embarrassment of having

people stop by unannounced, spending more time moping about my reality rather than doing something to change it. Yeah, she was talking about me, so I looked at her charts and routines more closely and decided to give it a try.

So I divided my chores and laundry into the days of the week, leaving a day free of work. Each day there is a chore and a load of laundry (seriously, when I don't keep up with it I have piles and piles and piles of it taking over the bathroom, bedroom, and basement floors). Of course some maintenance chores are hard to schedule.



And there are two rules:

1. When your chores for the day are done, you are done! If you have extra time, you pat yourself on the back and enjoy a good book, or a cup of tea, go for a walk, take a yoga class, or you spend guiltless time on Facebook.

2. If you miss a day, you don't have to catch up, you only do your work for the day. The following week you can tackle cleaning the microwave, or whatever you missed (after all, if you are like me, this might be the way you live right now).

The girls have some chores too, but since two of them have special needs, the chores are simple, and we keep those mainly to the evening. That is when the girls help clean up the living room and pick up their rooms before starting their bedtime routine (they are pretty good at helping out when asked). The other chores will be associated with pets.

When evening routine starts, it means we all do our own routine. For example, while the girls pick up, I work on my routine too:

- Pick up stuff on the floor
- Check calendar

- Make to do list for next day
- Charge cell phone
- Write down a schedule for the next day on a dry/erase board (this helps a lot with transitions for my girls with special needs)
- Know what is for lunch and dinner the next day
- Get clothes ready for the girls
- My husband tackles the kitchen during that time, he is also in charge of paying bills.

I know what you might be thinking, “How is this living intentionally?” Personally, these little details of life weight me down! They really do. The state of my home directly reflect the state of my emotions. I spend much of my day wasting time being involved in social media, rather than investing my time in the people I love, like my husband and my girls. And this helps me live intentionally because if life makes sense, I am more likely to engage with real people and feel like living!

I have two girls with special needs, so we already have a few extra challenges. I need to do something to make life a little easier for us so when the next unexpected sickness or extra appointment shows up, I am not already struggling to survive. And if I find myself in a good rhythm, I can tackle organizing toys, or the book shelf, or the stack of mail.

And yes, it does mean we need to be intentional to make it happen, but the investment will reap it’s rewards.

I don’t need a New Year’s resolution, I just need to take my life and time back, and that starts when I live intentionally.

Adapted from Ellen Stumbo’s blog at . Ellen is a pastor’s wife and she writes about finding beauty in brokenness with gritty honesty and openness. She is passionate about sharing the real – sometimes beautiful and sometimes ugly – aspects of faith, parenting, special needs, and adoption. She has been published in Focus on the Family, LifeWay, MomSense, Not Alone, and Mamapedia among others.