Re-KALC for a Meaningful Beginning: The Practice of Being

Abstract

The new year is a time for goal setting, reflection, and new beginnings. Often, resolutions begin with self-improvements of the physical kind—losing weight, exercising, eating clean. These are important ideas and goals, although often difficult to sustain in part because sustaining is an implied element of each. Intentions are different than goals in the sense that an intention can be implemented in any moment in time simply through the process of mindful reflection.

A new year, the habit of focusing on doing can become a habit that squeezes time out of the day. The daily processes of doing can become a habit that squeezes out the powerful experiences of being. In the process of planning for a new year, the habit of focusing on doing can also push us away from experiencing greater personal and professional meaning.

Setting intentions for the new year instead of goals can seem awkward and confusing. This simple guide provides a framework for setting intentions that can bring awareness and meaning:

- **K** = Kindness.
- **A** = Acceptance.
- **L** = Love.
- **C** = Curiosity.

It is important to remember to choose an intention that feels personally relevant. These four practices/KALC are easy to remember but there are many other intentions that can be chosen and engaged to experience being. Engaging in an intention takes seconds; does not require a special time, place, or equipment; and becomes more natural over time. The KALC model can assist by providing a short list of intentions from which to select. Choose a time during the day to practice being. The time does not need to be prescheduled and only requires a mindful pause of a moment to acknowledge the intention to practice being.

The Practice of Being Kind

Kindness is defined as the act of being friendly, generous, and considerate. Being kind can be implemented on a drive to work, a stop at the coffee shop, an interaction with a coworker or family member, in a meeting, or during a break. Taking a moment at any time during the day to stop and intentionally practice a moment of kindness can change the trajectory of the day. Being kind adds personal value each time the intention is applied; there is no limit to the number of times and ways it can be applied. Unlike a diet or exercise routine, skipping a day does not lessen the previously gained value. Applying the intention to ordinary circumstances can generate extraordinary results.

The Practice of Accepting

Acceptance is sought by everyone, which makes it seem like an obvious intention. However, seeking acceptance and being accepting are colliding forces. In the practice of being, acceptance is as simple as setting aside judgment or evaluation of a person or situation, even if just for a short period of time. Like kindness or any of the other intentions, practice brings this intention into sharper focus. Berry described the power of accepting as “acceptance helps reduce what people experience as negative,” (Berry, 2015). Acceptance requires mindful application, and its most challenging application may begin with self-acceptance. Self-criticism is rampant in our polarized society and is an eroding and destructive force. If acceptance of self can become a regular part of the intentional practice of being, changes in attitude are immediately evident and long lasting.

The Practice of Loving

“All you need is love” (Beatles, 1967), the now famous song lyric, resonates with almost everyone, but what does this intention mean and...
bring to the practice of being? Love is obvious and in some ways the most elusive of intentions, as it is the most personal. We tend to think of love as the emotion we reserve for our families and friends as an outward expression of affection, often manifested by giving gifts or time. In fact, the intention of love in the practice of being begins with inward expression. Intentionally, loving oneself may sound corny or touchy-feely and thus feel uncomfortable. Becoming emotionally open feels like risky business, and one must be willing to trust that the rewards outweigh the risks. Dr. Akram Boutros, President and Chief Executive Officer of the MetroHealth system in Ohio, maintains that loving the people in your organization is the only way to lead through turbulent times (Boutros, 2016). Talking about love in the workplace has been somewhat taboo because there is confusion of romantic love with its nonromantic form and worries about gender–power–sexual implications. Despite the challenges of sorting these charged emotions, love as a powerful force in all human endeavors cannot be denied. It is through emotional connections that people’s best selves can take full form in work and personal lives.

THE PRACTICE OF BEING CURIOUS

“Knowledge is cheap, but curiosity is priceless” (Morehouse, 2017). Why curiosity? How does the intention of curiosity fit within a list of intentions more focused on emotional engagement? Curiosity in its fullest intention is completely uninhibited. In practicing curiosity, one surrenders control and becomes intellectually open and emotionally unobstructed. It is the mirror opposite of being expert and knowledgeable. It is the ultimate in practicing being with fresh eyes. It requires a level of self-love and self-acceptance so the vulnerability of not knowing is overcome by the desire for more. Using curiosity to truly seek a different level of understanding opens one’s thinking and provides a window into other perspectives and points of view. It is this openness that provides comfort with diversity and differences that paves the way to broader understanding of self and others. (Partridge, 2016).

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER TO DO?

Nurses are doers. We work in a profession that is physical and demanding. The emotional assaults can be overwhelming and the personal relationships intense. Over time, as job demands build, our minds and spirits develop defense mechanisms like callouses to shield us from the impacts on our personal and professional lives. These callouses, like strictures, limit our flexibility. Over time, authenticity gives way to mindless trips to work, superficial interactions with others, and obsessive doing. As scientists, nurses, and educators, we value the cognitive domain of learning and some may even consider it the highest order of the learning domains. As practitioners, the psychomotor domain has traditionally captured and subsumed nursing practice, such that doing has overshadowed fullness of the profession. Learning science tells us it is the affective domain where the power of motivation, attitudes, perceptions, and values most affects student learning. In the practice being described here, adopting and engaging in an intention exposes the individual to an experience of being (being kind, accepting, loving, or curious). In valuing and supporting the development of intentions such as these, the educator supports the transforming of attitudes and perceptions of learners. The learner changes from the inside out, and the adoption of being, as a tool for living and practicing more completely, becomes ingrained. The professional development educator can be a guide and mentor for each of the four KALC intentions and in doing so can dramatically transform self, others, and the culture.

The process of calculation means to intend to have a particular effect. The use of the KALC model and intentions to practice being are tools to effect personal change. The new year can truly be a new beginning for each of us when we choose to practice being through intention.

REFERENCES