

## Triggering Intention: How To Remember To Remember

by: Maya Talisman Frost You've got a lot to store in that brain of yours. Sometimes you need to remind yourself to remember something. The most effective way to remember is to choose your triggers wisely. Post-its work great, but I'm all for simplifying things even further. By choosing to make a certain behavior a trigger for a particular thought, we can skip the paper and adhesive and get right to the important stuff. The trick is to be intentional about it. We tend to hop in the shower and let our minds wander to all the stuff we're supposed to do. We go about the process of soaping, shaving, and shampooing without paying much attention to what we're doing. We jump into our cars each morning, absorbed by our thoughts. We wash the dishes, sort the laundry, wait in line at the gas station, stand at the grocery counter, and vegetate during commercials without noticing what we're thinking. By incorporating some simple mindfulness techniques into our daily routine, we can focus on our intentions and create lasting changes in our brains. We've already learned that in order to get our brains to work for us instead of against us, we must come up with present-tense statements that we would like to be true, and we have to repeat them to ourselves daily. Spend some time coming up with two or three one-sentence statements about how you want to feel. No fair using numbers. This isn't about setting sales goals or salary amounts or even the number of pounds you want to lose. Make a statement that simply describes how you want to feel about your life right now. Here's a list of possible statements: "I am filled with joy and excitement each day." "I feel confident, relaxed, and open to whatever the day may bring." "I have plenty of time to accomplish whatever I need to do." "I have plenty of energy to enjoy my free time." "I attract plenty of money for all my needs." "I am surrounded by loving people who want only the best for me." "I am fit, healthy and active." "I am calm and mindful of all that arises in and around me." Your brain needs to hear these positive statements, even if you think YOU don't need to. Humor your brain, okay? Give it some happy food to chew on. Allow your mind to mull things over subconsciously. Brain research tells us that we need to see it, say it and hear it. If at all possible, say your statements out loud if only in a whisper. Watch yourself in a mirror while you do it. Hear your voice saying the words. Visualize what it looks and feels like when each statement is true. The more senses you engage, the more quickly your brain will absorb your statement. Remember that your mind doesn't sort thoughts into neat piles marked "real" or "imagined". Everything goes in and is processed in the same way. You must feed your brain what you want to believe. We all do a great job of spooning in the negative thoughts, so why is it too much to ask to dish out a few positive ones? Once you've got your statements, then what? How do you remember to repeat them in a consistent way? Choose your triggers. Select a certain habit or activity that you engage in every single day. It can be something as simple as brushing your teeth. Any activity that gives you about 30 seconds of time to focus will work. It helps to choose an activity that is somehow related to your intention statement. For example, let's say that you want to feel less rushed. Think of a trigger related to time. Hitting the snooze button? Looking at your watch? Waiting for your bus or train? Don't choose ALL of these-you won't remember them all. Instead, choose one single action to be your trigger for repeating that statement. Think "time" whenever you engage in that activity, and repeat your statement: "I have plenty of time to accomplish everything I need to do." Or, you could use that trigger to think "relaxed" and repeat "I am relaxed and unhurried." Use the language that works best for you, but make sure it is present tense and positive--say "I am relaxed" instead of "I'm not stressed." Neuroscientific studies indicate that if we say the word "stressed" our brains will zero in on that and skip the "not" part! Once you've selected it, start creating the habit of repeating your statement to yourself whenever you engage in that behavior. Want to work on your attitude about money? Every time you open your checkbook or use your credit card, remember "plenty" and repeat your intention statement about it. "I attract plenty of money for all of my needs." Maybe you want to spend less money. In that case, think "save" and say "I save money wisely" or "I am thrifty and frugal." Looking to improve your approach to your wellness? Repeat your intention statement each time you take the first bite of a meal or lace up your exercising shoes. Think "healthy" and repeat "I am fit, healthy and active." Longing to find a loving relationship? Each time you see an affectionate couple or someone you find attractive, remember "love" and state your intention: "I am loved deeply and treated lovingly." It's easy to get caught up in the negative thought cycles we've all developed during our lives. Our brains already know the "I'm never going to get ahead financially" story and the "No matter what I do, I can't lose this weight" story. Our minds are getting way too many repeats of the "Other people fulfill their dreams, but not me" fairy tale. Ack. Turn the page. New story! Dish up some positive intention statements, and make sure they become a regular part of your routine by attaching them to the triggers you feel will work best for you. Make it easy for your brain to remember to remember. And okay, use Post-its if that helps.

## About the Author

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