

#21



# Creating Intentional Behaviors

With consistent effort and intention, you can build new, healing pathways in your brain and expand your window of tolerance through repeated, conscious behaviors.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit [supportgroups.saprea.org](https://supportgroups.saprea.org).** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

## Group Activity

---

### ASPIRATIONAL THINKING

**Aspirational thinking is directing your thoughts toward the future with the belief that you can heal.** With this shift in your focus, you can more easily make choices that reflect your hopes, dreams, and the future you want, rather than choices that are driven by fear or distress.

One way to begin practicing aspirational thinking is to set intentions. An intention centers on what you value in life and/or what you would like to work towards for your future. Intentions are independent of goals; they are lived each day and focus on the relationship we've fostered with ourselves. Goal-setting is about setting measurable steps, while intention-setting is about gazing inward to help us understand what we want for ourselves, in the present and in the future.

**Setting intentions looks different for everyone.** They can be set daily, weekly, or monthly. They can be written out as a sentence, phrase, or word. For one person, it might be writing in their planner: "I approach new situations with curiosity and an open mind." For another, it's the phrase "body kindness" on a sticky note beside the bathroom mirror. It may even be the word "explore" or "gratitude" or "nourishment" posted on a collage and surrounded by images that visualize your intentions.

How would you like to set and remind yourself of your intentions? As you're thinking of ideas, below are a couple of activities to help you get started.

## ACTIVITY STEPS



**Note:** For Option 1 of this activity, the group leader will need to provide supplies to create collages, including magazines, poster boards, scissors, and glue sticks. Or, the group leader can modify this option to have participants brainstorm and write down ideas for a collage and/or browse the internet for images they can use for a digital collage. If meeting online, the group leader can invite participants to post images for their collage in the group chat.

### OPTION 1—ASPIRATION COLLAGE

**An Aspiration collage is a collection of images that illustrate what you want your life to look like.** This might include changes you'd like to make, areas of your life you want to focus on, or visual reminders of what you care about most. It might also include things that excite you, bring you joy, or foster feelings of hope and encouragement. Keep in mind that the mere existence of an Aspiration collage can't alter your future. Rather, it serves as a visual expression of the intentions you'd like to set as well as the self-compassion required as you work towards those intentions.

#### 01 **Decide where you'd like to put your Aspiration collage.**

Aspiration collages can be made in a variety of ways, like a bulletin board in your bedroom, a word splash in your journal, a folder on your desk at work, or even a desktop background on your computer. Whatever you choose, make sure it's somewhere you'll see on a consistent basis. Once you know the size and space you'll be working with, it will make the next steps easier.

#### 02 **Gather images.**

Find images that embody your intentions, literally or figuratively. For this step, you can use the images provided by the group leader, or you can write down a list of images that you plan to look for later. You could also take this time to browse through images on your phone and bookmark any inspirations that stand out to you. Maybe you'd rather put together a digital collage, like a Pinterest board, that you can save and add to as often as you'd like.

#### 03 **Put the images together.**

Do you want your images to look like a collage with no white space? Do you want images that are all the same shape and size? Spend time organizing the images in a way that feels the most comfortable to you. Or, if you are in the brainstorming stage, write down some ideas of how you'd like your collage to look.

#### 04 **Put the date on it.**

If creating an Aspiration collage resonates with you, you may find yourself creating them more often. Putting the date, even just the month and year, on each will help you see how your intentions change, how you accomplish your goals, or the ways you grow over time.

#### 05 **Display it once you are finished.**

You started with an idea of where you wanted it. When you finish—either here during group or later at home—hang it up or put the file on your computer so that you can see it every day and remind yourself what your dreams and intentions are.

## OPTION 2—FUTURE SELF MEDITATION

Another way to develop aspiration thinking is to imagine an interaction with your future self.

- 01** Close your eyes or soften your gaze as you listen to Group Leader A read the following guided meditation aloud.

### Guided Meditation Script

Imagine you are in your favorite outdoor space. Perhaps it is a beach at sunset. Perhaps it is a secluded wood or a quiet garden.

Imagine yourself walking through this place and toward a dwelling. This is the dwelling of your future self—an older, wiser “you” who has fulfilled your hopes and dreams. As you walk up to the door of this dwelling to greet your future self, notice how old your wiser self is, how they are dressed, how they appear, and how they move as you walk with them.

**Imagine yourself sitting and talking with your wiser self.** Notice their presence, their energy, and how it affects you. Take some time to ask your wiser self how they came to be who they are; listen carefully to their answer. Ask what helped them most along the way. What did they have to let go of to become who they are? In what areas of their life did they foster new growth? What new behaviors and thought patterns did they cultivate?

Before you leave the dwelling, your future self offers you a gift. It’s a small box with a message of wisdom inside that can help you in this moment. You open the box and look inside. What does the message say?

- 02** After you’ve finished the visualization, reflect on the following questions:
- What did you learn from your future self that can help you develop aspirational thinking right now?
  - What aspirational thoughts do you want to focus on now after interacting with your future self?
- 03** Write down your thoughts as a springboard for potential intentions you’d like to set.

# Grounding Exercise

---

## POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Positive affirmations are sentences you say to yourself to remind you of your value, how far you've come, and how capable you are of continuing your healing journey. They can serve as an anchor to this moment, as well as a tool to nurturing self-compassion.

So let's begin.

### Activity Steps

- 01** Select an affirmation from this list or choose one of your own.
  - I am enough.
  - I am learning to love myself.
  - I choose happiness.
  - I am moving forward on my healing journey one choice at a time.
  - I have strength and power to take whatever comes my way.
  - I can do challenging things.
  - I am grateful for this day and the many possibilities it affords.
  - I deserve compassion, kindness, and understanding.
- 02** Repeat the affirmation in your mind as you inhale and exhale, envisioning the words as your anchor to the present.
- 03** As your mind wanders, gently redirect it back to the affirmation, noting your attention with patience and curiosity.
- 04** Continue this exercise for 1–2 minutes. As you do so, you might choose a new affirmation to focus on or stick with the same one—whatever works best for you.
- 05** When you are finished, allow yourself a few paced breaths, imagining feelings of warmth and compassion flowing through you.

---

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at [saprea.org](https://www.saprea.org).

- **DEVELOPING ASPIRATIONAL THINKING**
- **CREATING INTENTIONAL BEHAVIORS**
- **CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

#### NEXT TOPIC:

**#22**



#### ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Assertive communication is a valuable tool that helps us to take control of how we express ourselves—including our needs, wants, and boundaries—in a way that feels honest and authentic, while still respecting the other person.