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You are listening to Supporting Supporters, a ChangetoChill podcast. This is a free mental well-being resource offered by Allina Health. My name is Tonya Freeman. I'm a licensed psychologist and regional lead psychologist with Allina Health.

These podcast episodes are aimed with the goal of providing quick, tangible resources and information from Allina Health mental health providers on a range of mental health topics relevant to day to day lives of the listener. We invite you to join us in any way you please, whether you sit back and kick your feet up, or as you engage in movement, your daily commute, or as you prepare for your day. However you choose to join us, we welcome you and we honor your time.

Today we are talking about setting intentions with Dr. Heather Crabtree, who serves as a primary care psychologist for children, adolescents, and families, and is a supervisor for our post-doctoral trainees. Please join us in understanding more about setting intentions and how this practice can benefit your self-care routine.

--- Episode ---

Hello there. I'm Heather Crabtree and I am a psychologist who works primarily with children, adolescents, and their families. In my work with clients and families I often partner with schools and also hear a lot from my clients about the impact that school personnel have on their lives. This is such an important and valued contribution to these children's lives and society as a whole. By listening to this podcast, it is obvious how much you care about your students and that you want to continue to develop your understanding and skills. Thank you for all you do. I hope this will be helpful for you.

Today we will be talking about setting intentions. This has been a topic that has been talked some about in the media and within other topics about self-care. Sometimes it can be confused with goalsetting. In general setting intentions is different from goal setting in that setting goals is future oriented and tends to be more so oriented on a very specific outcome. Setting intentions focuses more on keeping us present in the moment and trying to maintain the right mindset in order to achieve our goals. It aligns us with our values, which keeps us on track to live the type of life that we envision for ourselves. Now I know that some of this seems more lofty or hypothetical so as we talk through this I will try to put it more into actionable or practical steps that we can take together.

So when we think about setting an intention for the day, we want to think about what is our purpose for today, what is our inspiration, what is our motivation. In trying to determine this for ourselves there are a few questions that we can ask ourselves. A general question could be: "Today, I intend to ____". Other questions could be "What kind of person do I want to be today?" "What kind of attitude do I want to have towards others today?" "What do I need to focus on today to achieve my goals?" Now these sound like simple questions but when we really dive into them I think they can provide us with some good material to set intentions for the day.

Let's try to go through an example together. I know that many of us are rushed during the week especially in the mornings. Right? We have a lot to do, and a lot going on. So let's just try to envision ourselves waking up in the morning taking just a minute for ourselves- even just 60 to 90 seconds. Sitting up in bed, placing a hand on our heart, feeling our beating heart, taking a deep breath, connecting with ourselves and the day ahead of us. We are going to think to ourselves "Today I intend to focus on being kind to myself and others." So if that is our intention for the day then as we move through today as we remind ourselves of our intention to be kind to not only others but to ourselves than that should really color everything that we do throughout the day. I would envision then as I am going through my day, some things will not go as I plan but my intention may change how I choose to react. So let's just say I didn't handle that meeting with the boss very well this morning. Self kindness would tell me to breathe and show myself compassion. A child in my

classroom is having a hard time? My intention of kindness will remind me to react first with understanding. So again this sort of setting intentions is not necessarily going to change the world around us, but it can help us change our reactions and the way that we interact with our environment.

So how do you know what to set your intention as? It certainly doesn't have to be kindness (although it's not a bad one to start with!). Let's go through a few examples together. You can also google examples- there are a lot out there! Here are a few I like:

- Stay focused on my to-do list
- Be present in the moment
- Stick up for my own beliefs
- Listen to my intuition and let it guide me
- Enjoy my creativity
- Be intentional and organized with my work
- Open myself to new possibilities without shutting myself down
- Prioritize what matters most
- Embrace change in all forms

Now I know that at least for me sometimes follow-through can be a little bit tricky when life gets in the way. So I wanted to spend just a minute or 2 talking about things that can be helpful to improve follow-through with intentions.

Reminders of our intention throughout the day can be really helpful and so whatever type of reminders are typically helpful for you normally can work great for intentions as well. So for example if Post-it notes are great for you normally, just writing a 1 word Post-it note that will remind you of your intention-- so in our kindness example that we use before just writing the word "kindness" on a couple of Post-it notes-- and putting it on your desk or on the dash of your car or wherever else you are going to be that day can act as a reminder of your daily intention to your brain. Setting an alarm on your phone that will go off at several times during the day, writing your intention in your journal, or writing it in your planner can also be helpful. Another idea may be to have check in times with yourself throughout the day, such as breaks in your schedule, lunch, bathroom breaks, walking down the hallway; different times to just check in and remind yourself about your intention. Lastly, having a reflection time at the end of the day to check in about how your intention for the day went, how you felt, and how things went overall can also be helpful.

I also wanted to add in another important piece here which is gratitude. Whenever we are striving for more in life, whether it setting goals or intentions, I think it is important to recognize that practicing gratitude is an essential part of this process. There will be more specific information about gratitude in future podcasts, so definitely tune into those. But as we incorporate it into setting intentions, as you are doing your check-in at night it is important to make sure that you incorporate at least 1 moment of gratitude, something that you are grateful for or feel content about in your life.

One thing that is often asked is how to find time to do these things, because I know that we are all busy already. And this is a very legitimate question as we all have very busy lives. Once you have

practiced these skills a few times they really do not take very much time, similar to the 60 to 90 seconds in the morning like we had talked about previously. So the times that you can find to do this would be small bits of time such as when you are crawling into bed, taking a shower in the evening, packing your lunch for the next day, or any other quiet time. It is important to not set yourself up for expecting to find larger chunks of time such as 20 to 30 minutes of uninterrupted quiet time. It is great if you do have that amount of time to use, but don't set yourself up to expect that if it's not realistic. Please try to find these little moments which can still be beneficial for self-care.

Thank you again for sticking with us through this conversation about setting intentions. I really hope that this has been helpful. I think that there are 3 main points that can be used in your daily life:

1. First, intentions are different than goals but just as important. Remember that goals are future oriented and usually outcome based whereas intentions are present oriented and more about what mindset you are bringing to your day.
2. The second take-home message would be to take the time every morning to set an intention for yourself that is focused on how you want to be that day and aligns with our own values or the type of life that you want to live (such as being kind or what you would like to focus on).
3. Finally the last take-home message today is that setting intentions should definitely go along with gratitude. We can be grateful for what we have while also striving for more. It is important to recognize that you are doing the best you can every day with the resources (both internal and external) that you have.

---Outro---

On behalf of Allina Health and Change to Chill, we thank you for taking the time to listen to our podcast. We do hope you enjoyed this episode and we hope that you join us in other episodes covering even more interesting topics with mental health providers. As always, you can find the show notes and any accompanying research and tools at the change to chill website at www.changetochill.org. In health and wellness, take care and see you next time!