



EUDAEMONIA
Intention, with Dr Ian Brooks

August 25, 2021

Kim Forrester (00:00):

How often are you a passenger in your own life, passively following the path laid out before you? And how much happier and healthier could you be if you chose to get into the driver's seat? I'm Kim Forrester, you're listening to the Eudaemonia podcast and, today, we're going to explore the idea of living with intention.

Intro (00:26):

Welcome to Eudaemonia, the podcast that is all about flourishing. Plug in, relax, and get ready for the goodness, as we explore the traits and practices that can help you thrive in life ... with your host, Kim Forrester.

Kim Forrester (00:46):

Ian Brooks is the CEO and founder of Rhodes Smith, LLC. Prior to starting Rhodes Smith, Ian spent 25 years improving individual stories within various Fortune 500 companies, either internally or as a consultant. His unique perspective combines experiences from clinical psychology, work within organizations, and being a human continuously evolving. Ian's latest book is simply entitled Intention. It's a pleasure to be connecting with Ian today to talk about the importance of living with purpose and intent, and to learn how we can focus our intention for positive transformation and greater wellbeing. Dr. Ian Brooks, it is just a delight to have you here with me on the Eudaemonia podcast. Thank you for choosing to gift your time today.

Ian Brooks (01:36):

Well, thank you, Kim. It's wonderful to have our conversation today.

Kim Forrester (01:40):

I really enjoyed reading your book, Intention. It kind of opened my eyes in many ways to the choices that I'm making in my own life and the way that I allow opportunities to come into my life and sort of disappear as well. Let's start with the obvious question. What is the difference between something you want to do, or something you think you're going to do, and something you truly intend to do? What is the magic ingredient that activates our intention?

Ian Brooks (02:13):

Yeah, Kim, that's a great question. I've gotten it a number of times around, what is that difference? Because at times we can confuse and imply that what we want or plan is something that we intend. In that respect, plans and want are components of intention. But the driving

force of one's intentions is the priority that drives the purpose of our actions and our choice to do something different. We're consciously thinking of the difference in action that moves us, when we're thinking about doing something intentionally. So as we think about intention, it's that conscious ability and awareness in the moment to acknowledge what we want, how we're feeling, and how we're going to act in that moment - of which having a desire from a 'want' standpoint, as well as a plan to take action are just a part.

Kim Forrester (03:11):

Wow. So you used the word 'priority' and I can see what you're saying there is that when we intend to take action in a particular way, we hold that intention at the front of our mind at all times. Right? And so all other choices and decisions are made around that intention. Would you say that's accurate?

Ian Brooks (03:31):

Yes. That's very accurate. It's one of the bigger challenges that we all face when we're embarking upon any level of transformation, or when we're acting with a particular level of intent. It's having it at the forefront of our mind, and that purpose of action trumps just about anything that we might do unconsciously, or even things that we put to the back consciously because of our own desires in that particular moment, and how they're going to lead us to an end result or behaviors consistent of what we're trying to achieve.

Kim Forrester (04:05):

Let's talk about that word 'purpose', because it strikes me that there are many people around the world right now who have an intention to carry out some activity - an intention to accomplish a certain something - but a lot of times, I think that intention is based on something we've been told to do by somebody else. Right? We've been told by our parents that we ought to become an accountant and so we intend to do so. Is intention as powerful when it comes from a purpose or a goal or a target that's been gifted to us by someone else, as it is when that intention, that purpose, flows authentically from within?

Ian Brooks (04:52):

Yeah, it's oftentimes in our life we are being directed that take us in a different direction by people, places, or things that move us in different ways and afford us to have a more opportunistic view into what our intentions should be. And in that respect, when we want to act in accordance with our authenticity, it's extremely important. That is key towards our delivery of our own intentions and even the expectations placed on us by others, which can mask our true selves. Now that that being said, intention is still powerful if we're pursuing outcomes that don't resonate with us. So in my book, *Intention*, I use an example of a dot on a chalkboard and how others may tell us what they see to influence what we do based off of that dot on the chalkboard. We can still act intentionally when dots are to us, by others. What is key and critical in that view and lens is that, it starts with ownership of what we're willing to do with the expectations placed on us by others. So, as an example, I was coaching a leader on his ability to communicate and engage with his team. During one of my first meetings with him, he stated

he didn't know why he needed a coach nor what he was expected to achieve in that coaching session. This is an example of others - in his case, the CEO - wanting him to work on specific skills to improve his leadership and how that impacted his team, to manage this unknown dot. We discussed the feedback received from others, what his perceptions were, and what he was willing and felt comfortable doing to improve in certain ways. Now such a philosophy can be extended to anyone who is living a life of expectations from others. We do this by acknowledging the area of improvement or change that others have put upon us, and empowering ourselves to take some stock in our choices; to do what feels comfortable for us and aligns to our own authenticity so we're not losing sight of ourselves while our dots may be shown to us.

Kim Forrester (07:15):

What I hear you saying there, Ian, is that we can intentionally carry out goals or targets or projects that we know have been given to us by somebody else, just as we can intentionally step forward into authentic personal transformation.

Ian Brooks (07:35):

Absolutely. And what is critical about that is about our choice. We do have a choice on what we will do. And in that context, that allows us to be empowered to move forward, be it on what's handed to us based off expectations or, and as important as we think about personal transformation, what we empower ourselves to move forward with as well.

Kim Forrester (08:03):

Your book is generally about personal transformations and intentional transformation. You sort of write in the very beginning of your book, that we're wired to evolve and grow. And I absolutely resonate with that phrase. That's exactly what we're wired to do. And you say that intention moves us away from passive growth and makes it more purposeful. Why is purposeful evolution so important for us? Why is it important for our happiness, and our wellbeing, and our fulfillment?

Ian Brooks (08:36):

Yeah. You know, as I was writing the book and first got started and I was thinking about some of the challenges that my clients were facing - both within organizations as well as the individuals I was coaching individually - it all resonated with, you have to want to do something on purpose. And I believe purposeful evolution is important for happiness and wellbeing because we're empowering ourselves to take action and owning the results. In my view, passive evolution occurs with and without our consent. We are left to the whims of the environment around us, to control our happiness and wellbeing in that particular event. But by taking control of our happiness and wellbeing - and as important, making a decision to do something different - wrestles the control back to ourselves in a way that best serves the direction we want to take.

Kim Forrester (09:32):

Let's go deeper into that concept there because passive evolution, I think, is largely what we're used to and therefore is largely what we feel most comfortable with, Ian. You know, it takes away the responsibility. So, if I allow life to sort of make the decisions for me, well, then I can't fail at it. I can't choose the wrong path. I am not responsible for the outcome. And Ian, I think there's an added element here as well, because for some, the passive approach aligns with their spiritual values; the concept of, you know, what will be, will be. Or surrender to God or the universe and allow life to bring me what is best for me. So in that regard, intentional transformation can be incredibly confronting and discomfoting. How do we overcome that fear? First of all, how do we find it within ourselves? How do we recognize when we are being passive and how do we take that first step to push through and become more purposeful and intentional in those changes?

Ian Brooks (10:41):

Yes, you're absolutely right. And I love the passage that you mentioned, just from a spiritual perspective, because a lot of change - and even operating with intent - comes from an emotional side and belief of which we're ingrained with. And as such, as we all are, we are approaching life with an ingrained way where our instincts kick in. But when changes arise, we find that we can't lean on those qualities to get us through in that passive approach. We're now trusting things around us that are outside of our control. And in that context, we then find, and sometimes struggle and even sometimes even become frustrated, when we resist being our authentic selves. And now we're relying upon just things to materialize. I'm asking us not to forget the fears, or our beliefs in the spirit, and believing that there is something bigger than us - that what will be will be, and that we can surrender to the process. But that does not mean we need to be a passive participant because, in said belief, we are taking some level of action and thought and operating and living our lives in a certain way. And just as we have that thought, and in our ability to live a life in a certain way, we too can alter that believing that we are still moving down the path that what will be will be. So in that context, I'm reinforcing with my clients, and even through my book, that there's a focused energy on how to best use our skills. We can compliment the 'what will be will be' by taking active steps on what we are guided to do. It takes a focus, determination, and dedication to live our lives and create opportunities that then will enhance us both in our action, in our mentality, and how we think, but also not to be lost spiritually and emotionally.

Kim Forrester (12:49):

You share in your book, Ian, the story of a client who wants something, but can't quite define what that something is. And I am sure that this is a situation that we can all relate to, you know, at some point of our life. All we know is, we don't want to be here, we don't want to be doing this. So how on Earth can we focus our intention when we know that we want to make changes - that restlessness is unavoidable within us - but we aren't sure what those changes are?

Ian Brooks (13:24):

Yeah. I do see a lot of individuals who are seeking the "What's in it for me, what should I be doing?" And what that tells me from an acknowledgement standpoint is, do they know who they

are? Because now they're searching for something outside of themselves. And for those who are looking for something, but can't define it, they're probably anchoring on the things that they see, or read, or have expectations placed on them that they're trying to meet. And now they're in a place of resistance. And so in those situations, when I do have clients - again, it's a very common conversation to have, that 'they want something' - I first start, who are you? Who are you? And what is it that you want? What do you think you want to do to be better?

Kim Forrester (14:24):

Wow.

Ian Brooks (14:24):

That's the start. And now we can have a conversation around the possibilities. We can now, then, have a conversation and say, how well does your life currently map to this possibility? And then we can start down a path of figuring out and really clarifying how we can change your 'something' into true, authentic transformation

Kim Forrester (14:49):

Already in this conversation, you've spoken a lot about, you know, knowing what we feel, asking ourselves who we are. There's an awful lot of mindfulness in the conversation. There's an awful lot of self-awareness. Are these concepts important, do you think, when it comes to intention? And are there other concepts that we can tap into to help us live more intentionally? And I'm thinking of things like determination, curiosity. Do you think that self-awareness, mindfulness, determination, curiosity, and other facets can help us live and transform more intentionally?

Ian Brooks (15:29):

Absolutely. Each of what you just described, from self-awareness, mindfulness, determination and curiosity, do play a role in living intentionally. Added, I would say, confidence of self, and building capabilities to address challenges are also critical skills and feelings and experiences. These last two facets within ourselves strengthen our sense of intention as there will be points of failure, fear and also, as you mentioned earlier, vulnerability that comes with anything new. Waiting on life's opportunities in a passive way, hides us from showcasing these capabilities. But we are reliant on them when we step into the unknown and actions in accordance to new patterns in thinking. So in the moment, self-awareness, mindfulness, determination and curiosity are critical drivers in actually moving us forward. But I also say, what will actually sustain us and take us through more of the challenging times, is our confidence that we know we can.

Kim Forrester (16:39):

Ian, we've spoken a lot about intentional activity. Is it equally as important to enjoy intentional inactivity? Are there benefits to waiting or resting with intention? And if so, how do we gain the greatest benefit from these intentional pauses in our day or in our life?

Ian Brooks (17:01):

Absolutely. It is extremely important to take intentional inactivity of any change. It's why holidays so important, any vacation, and just any downtime. Even just to stare at a wall, watch TV, or read a book, something that takes us away. The more we control in one area of our life, the more we are too lapse in others, as we likely don't have the mental or physical control to manage regular actions. So I do make sure, and reinforce that, we need to build in time of inactivity - or, said differently, activities that don't require the same level of thinking and intentional thought as you would embark on outside of that change.

Kim Forrester (17:47):

Wow. What you've shared there I think is really important for many of us to put in our back pocket and understand - that just because we're intentional about a target or a goal or a transformation, doesn't mean that we have to apply our energy and our focus and our determination to it 24-7, 365 days a year. What have you changed about the way that you live life, Ian, since you started understanding the power of intention? The Eudaemonia podcast is all about flourishing. So how has living intentionally helped you flourish?

Ian Brooks (18:25):

Yes, that's a great question. And I have to say it has really transformed me in ways that I could not have imagined. Especially when I first started writing my book. I will say that living with intention has definitely helped me flourish, but I've also been living with intentional understanding through my education and my work life. Since I was maybe 13, since I was a 13 year old child, I had the intention of the schools I wanted to intend and the reasons I wanted to go there. And for me, it was always the context of, I want to go somewhere new; someplace I had never been, someplace that I would have to learn about myself as well as getting the Scholastic education we were paying for. But as I began to write this book, I realized that my perspective of family and relationships changed to the point where I had to alter my intentions to match my own expectations. It's a point worth noting that our intentions today may evolve to new intentions tomorrow. And I can honestly say, it wasn't until I actually started writing this book for my clients, that the words and questions and perspective and lens I was offering my clients really hit home for me in altering how I viewed myself.

Kim Forrester (19:50):

I think, Ian, that when we set an intention, there's obviously a goal, a vision attached to that intention and we can become so attached to that end goal, that vision that if and when life steps in and says to us, "Hey, not that way" or "Not that way anymore" then many of us could resist the temptation to go with life's flow, right? Because no, we're attached to that intention, and it's got to be that goal, and it's gotta be that target, and it's got to be that way. How do you navigate that tension between what I have envisioned for myself - what I am intending for myself - and what life is bringing to you?

Ian Brooks (20:40):

Yes. Life offers us real time feedback on what our intentions are. As we started our conversation around the spirit and belief and the expectations of others, we can't control everything around us but not to be lost in our intentions. I also described in my book that we are building capabilities to transform our story. Capabilities are behaviors that are transferable to various situations. These behaviors are not dependent on a specific target or end game, but to what we can consistently achieve. I've found that those who struggle with the circumstances of life have built skills in one area that served a purpose, but are not transferrable to other situations. And thus, they result in struggling. We have to be willing to scrap what we know. And I'm asking individuals through the book, through the experience that they go through, to acknowledge what we are good at, but also things that we're not. That we don't escape that possibility, that reality, as we focus on capabilities such as communication, leadership, caring, knowledge of self. Heck for me, getting out from behind the shadows, for me. Skills that are transferable to different situations are a better arena for us to focus, but it starts with acknowledgement of who I am, who you are, and understanding our goals, our targets, our end games will always move. And as I help clients build these capabilities, we identify situations to practice these new skills. So when new situations arise without any knowledge or asking, they're left in a position to respond with behaviors they built rather than reacting to isolated events that may derail their progress.

Kim Forrester (22:35):

So what I hear you saying is that intentional living intentional transformation is not really about what we're achieving, it's about who we're becoming in the purposeful action that we're taking towards that achievement. Right? It's the, who are we becoming as we move intentionally through the day?

Ian Brooks (22:57):

Absolutely. And in my book that's - and not to spoil it for the listeners, but - that is the last part. You, we, myself have the gift of knowledge. That gift of knowledge is transferable of who we've become; it's around our behaviors. And as we go and embark upon a new journey, our milestones are those targets - of that new job, of that new title, of having better relationships, of being a better communicator, of how now I'm interacting with my family and children - those are milestones, but those milestones should not be confused with an end point.

Kim Forrester (23:42):

Ian, my final question is one that I ask every on the Eudaemonia podcast. Can you offer a morning reminder to my listeners? This may be a practice, a mantra, perhaps a favorite affirmation, something that can help us all live more intentionally each day.

Ian Brooks (24:00):

Sure. You know, for me, the one point that I would give to the Eudaemonia podcast listeners is, a practice I do daily. It's about being conscious of my purpose. It starts with taking time to reiterate what my priority is, in taking stock in my day to ensure I'm investing the time toward

that or those priorities. Those actions that are not aligned to my priorities, I consider how much effort do I really want to put into them, if any. If there's a lack of an alignment, that tells me that I've probably invested too much time in helping others, or my priorities are necessarily not aligned this practice. It's a reminder that we live only one life. And if I want something, I need to invest my time and effort towards its achievement. As you noted, it's not necessarily 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It is about making sure I take a determined and purposeful thought towards moving forward and making sure that there's determination and focus towards it.

Kim Forrester (25:15):

So it's either intentional action or intentional pause and rest. I am choosing, and purposely choosing, to rest today so that I am better equipped to move forward towards my intended goal or target tomorrow. Ian, your book is simply entitled intention. If people want to find out more about the book about you and your work, where can they go to find out more

Ian Brooks (25:42):

Sure Kim, your listeners can find me at my website, that is www.rhodessmith.com. On that website, they'll see more about my background, you'll have a chance to listen to this podcast as well, along with the write-ups specifically around the book, on feedback and reviews from others. As well as, they can find the book on Amazon, as well as on Barnes and noble. Also noted, we will be having an audio book coming out here in the next month or so, knowing that that's a preferable method as well. I can be found on social media, via Twitter and Instagram, with the handles @DrB_intention

Kim Forrester (26:28):

On a personal note, I want you to know that reading your book, listening to you today, you've already triggered some really interesting changes in the way that I approach my day. And I've already become more aware of how passive or where I am passive in my life. And I do love that idea of waking up each day and choosing to activate my intention very deliberately, very purposely toward the things that are most meaningful for me. Thank you so much for being a part of the Eudaemonia podcast and joining me here today. It's been an absolute delight.

Ian Brooks (27:02):

Yeah. It's been wonderful to speak with you, Kim, and it's hopefully your listeners have an opportunity to hear more about this book, but as well would love to chat with you more about your experiences reading it and what you've experienced just across this journey.

Kim Forrester (27:18):

As the Olympic cyclist, Kristin Armstrong once said, "We either live with intention or exist by default." You've been listening to the Eudaemonia podcast. If you'd like to learn more about how to live a truly flourishing life, please subscribe, check out www.eudaemoniapod.com for

more inspiring episodes, or come join me on Instagram @iamKimForrester. I'm Kim Forrester.
Until next time be well, be kind to yourself, and activate your intention.