

THE POWER OF THE PRESENT MOMENT

Right now is the present (the gift) and an opportunity for mastery of your perception of life. Yesterday is history (his-story, which should really be called 'thestory'), and tomorrow is a mystery. Every passing moment is an opportunity to change your life. The present moment is all we actually have. We will never be here again in the same way, so this moment is precious. To truly be aware of the beauty of now, you must be present in this moment. Everything is more beautiful if you realise you can never see or experience it again as you are now. This moment will never be more beautiful, nor this moment, nor this moment... Every new moment offers you the possibility to change your perception and therefore the experience of your life. Being in the moment is actually the experience of the moment, and not the thought of what it's like to be in the moment. The experience of the moment is mainly experienced through the right-brain experiential hemisphere and the body, not the left-brain thinking mind. Unfortunately, our attention is usually on the imaginary experience created by thought and imagination, and not on the physical, experiential sensations of the moment. When we let go of thought to engage in the physical experience of whatever is happening in the moment, time and everything else except the immediate experience of the present disappears. This is when true happiness and joy can be experienced.

Become aware of the feeling of being 'in your body' every few seconds by focusing on the 'feel' of it — not the emotions, but the sensations of your physical self. When you experience the feeling of being in the body properly, that will bring you closer to your connection to the moment, and creation, and closer to being able to awaken fully. You can then feel free whilst still being within the physical body. If you need to, you can also use your senses (sight, sound, touch, smell and taste) to bring you out of your thinking mind and into the experience of your body. When you identify too closely with the thinking mind, you will experience the human condition and probably feel trapped. Always try to have some or most of your attention on the physical experience of any moment. This is what I believe is meant by being grounded. A much higher level of resourcefulness is available to you when you are in the present moment. A racing driver can be concentrating so hard during high-speed racing that they basically enter a form of concentration meditation and starts to flow. Total focus on something generates Alpha brain waves, which cause you to feel more relaxed yet focused, and this accelerates learning and evaluation of information. Alpha brain waves give you *more* opportunity to experience happiness.

Focus on your senses to experience what is actually in front of you and come back to the experience of the moment. Use your eyes to see what is in front of you and focus on nothing else. Use your ears to listen to the sounds that are around you right now. Smell the smells and feel the air on your skin and the feel of your pulse. Fully experience your breathing. If you need to touch something, feel the material of your clothes, or the carpet, or grass under your feet, or run your fingers over your own skin. These things will help bring you into the experience of the moment. They will allow you to experience the present, and therefore the happiness that is available to you outside of imagination in the present. By focusing on the experience of breathing, you can feel your connection to your inner body. When you breathe in, visualise yourself as breathing in white or golden light. Trust that this light is universal energy. Allow the light that you are breathing in to fill and permeate every cell of your body. See yourself aglow with this light. See it expanding around you a few feet from your body. Experience your body as a

being of light and see it as healthy and clean within. This exercise can also help you ward off or clear up illness.

Only this moment truly exists. Once this moment is gone, it is gone forever. You can only ever bring it back as a hollow, imagined representation of what it was. Trying to hold onto a moment will cause suffering. Reliving a moment in the hope of changing it will cause suffering. Whilst you are analysing the last moment or planning the next, you cannot be fully present in this moment. This moment is all that is real and if you are not experiencing it you do not exist. You cannot experience true happiness or joy in the past, nor in the future. You can only experience it in the present moment. The more you indulge past or future, the more you'll have to indulge past or future. Presence in the moment dissolves the past and therefore the projection of the future, so practise being in the moment whenever you can.

You can be looking but not see, listening but not hear. Only being totally present in the moment will allow you to truly see, hear, and experience.

When you are truly in the present moment, you can look at something and see it for what it really is. You can make decisions and choices that would not be available to you if you were trapped in the chatter of past remembrances, the imagined projection of mental images, and indulgence of imagined future fantasies, or of thoughts of approval or disapproval. (By the way, when I use the words fantasy or fantasies, I refer to any imagined moment, event, situation or interaction. I want to make that clear because these words may carry meaning for some that could cause confusion about what I am actually saying, so please be clear on *my* meaning.) You cannot drive down the road looking in your rear vision mirror all the time, and not expect to have accidents. When you drive your car, you have to be fairly aware of what's going on 'now' or you are in trouble! Why then would you expect to go through life looking behind you (at the past) or at places you have not reached yet (the future) and then be surprised when you keep having accidents (challenging experiences) through lack of conscious awareness in the present?

Experiencing the present holds a happiness that is not dependent on circumstances. Happiness, when you truly experience the moment, is true happiness. If you believe fulfilment is in the future, you will never experience it in the present. If you live through hope for the future, you do not live through faith in the present. You will always be focused on the future or trying to escape the past, and your hopes will lie in your fantasies about the future. You will never be truly happy. The only true way to be happy is to experience the present moment fully. Anything else depends on being somewhere else in mental or imagined time or waiting for some other time to arrive. Constantly indulging in an imagined future, whether it is better or worse than your present, is an illusion that will cause you to miss out on the experience of happiness available to you now. Let the future come to you. It will. Just focus on now. True success is how you *feel*, 'now', not how you will feel at some point of calendar time. If you can't experience success now, then you will always believe that it is waiting at some point in the future that you will never actually reach. You will only get that fulfilment when you learn to experience it in the present. Right Now!

If you mostly live in the present, then the present moment is always an adventure, because you have no expectations (future imaginations) and no comparisons (evaluation against the perceived past). Everything can appear brand new, as if you're experiencing

it for the first time. If you don't remember the last moment because you're so focused on experiencing this moment, then you can be truly spontaneous. You truly understand that letting the last moment go will free you because it no longer truly exists. Most people spend their time trying to escape the present moment. They believe that their suffering is in experiencing the present moment, and somehow they can avoid the suffering by being somewhere else in thinking time. The suffering actually arises because you are not in, and experiencing, the present moment. It is partly that you are reliving the past or imagining the future, or creating a fantasy of the future based on the past that causes the struggle. Your whole time-line of life happens in present moments, and your whole life is a series of present moments, just as your whole past was a series of present moments. Everything that happened to you happened in a present moment.

Your life experience is not your life; it is your past. Your life is 'now' and it is up to you to decide what that is going to be like for you. You could not have truly experienced anything outside of the present moment. If you truly experienced it, then it happened in a present moment, not in the past, the future, or your imagination. If an event is not in the present moment, then it either no longer exists or has not yet come into existence. Nothing is real but the present moment. You need to really get this concept if you want to be truly happy. Your future has not happened yet, not in terms of your experience of this linear physical reality. Trying to live in the future will cause you discomfort at the very least. People who worry or are fearful all the time are constantly living in their negative imagined fantasies of the future. They may not even be aware of it, because they have been doing it for so long. Living in the future can only happen by using imagination, and your imagination is governed by the quality of your thinking now.

Transformation can take place in your life once you really understand that the past and the future are concepts used and created by the thinking mind indulging in imagination. When you are truly in the present moment, you can move to experiencing life through another part of the brain, the right hemisphere — the part that has far less to do with thinking, and much more of experiencing the moment as it happens. The way we treat the past is very interesting, especially if something has happened in the past that has caused us to feel somehow wounded. Your present shapes your future, not the past, unless you use the past to shape the present. You cannot change the past. You can only change your perception of the present, and that changes the meaning you apply to your perception of the past in the present. The only place change can occur is now. When you get cut or physically wounded, you don't go back to that injury at every opportunity and reopen it so it bleeds again, never letting it heal, and then say to people, "Look, this is why I am unhappy in the present, because I have this wound from the past." It would sound ludicrous, wouldn't it? Yet people do this all the time. Are you doing it, even a little?

The past is gone and is now simply a series of electrical impulses stored in your memory banks depicting the events that occurred in your life *'as you perceived them'* at the time. Your mind has taken all it needs from those events that it perceived to be of value for your future evaluation and survival. They are not emotions — they are merely electrical or digital renderings of a perceived event in your past story. There is nothing you can do about the past other than change your perception of it in the present, by changing your perception of you in the present. The past is no longer real unless you focus on it, and breathe life into the memory using imagination and with the same or a similar level of thought and vibration that created it.

Memories are really just stored in order that your thinking mind can use them to evaluate possible life-threatening situations in the present if needs be. You are already

free of the past. Unless you call it up by remembering an experience and give it meaning that creates emotional suffering now, there is no reason for the past to affect you. You can summon up memories forever and the suffering you create for yourself over it will not stop until you stop going back there and using it as a way to suffer or define yourself. Everything is changed from this moment on when your perception changes. It cannot be changed from then. Life is perception. If perception of now changes, perception of all other events changes too, past or future.

What about most of the moments in your life? Did you actually experience them? Or, as they were happening, were you dwelling in the past or fantasising about outcomes or situations in the future? If so, you were missing the experience that was available to you by actually being present in those moments. The present is the beginning, the middle and the end. It is all there is. Everything else is an illusion created by thought and imagination. I know people who sit in offices fantasising about being in the countryside. When they get to go to the countryside, they are thinking about what needs to be done in the office. Their mind always drags them from the present one way or another. It is not the surroundings that are the problem; it is where you are in mental time that is the problem. Where are you most often, in the past, the present or the future?

The only time you can be rich is now. Real richness and true wealth are not counted in dollars, but by how you 'feel' *right now*. When you can be fully grateful for what you already have — when you are happy just to be you — you are already rich. When you are happy just to be, there is no discomfort or struggle. There is only peace, no matter what stimulus you are subjected to from your external world. You can feel sad etc, but still be at peace. When you can truly just be, everything you want will manifest for you at some point, without having to struggle or strive for it. It brings a higher happiness because that is what you will have been feeling when you invited it into your life. Of course, this can only happen if you are present in the moment to invite it or experience it. Whether you like it or not, you are already getting what you truly expect to get. When you can be totally present in the moment, you already have total abundance. When you know there is richness in every moment, the focus is always on what is great in any moment, so practise cultivating this approach at every opportunity, and always look for what you can feel grateful for, especially with regard to yourself.

This moment holds absolutely everything you need. The present only contains the feelings of now. Both uplifting and disempowering emotions should be experienced in the moment, without adding to them with stories or imagination of course. Then they should be allowed to pass, so that the feelings from the next moments can be experienced fully as they arrive. This process brings with it true freedom, happiness and joy. If you don't feel good, look at what you are focusing on (giving your attention to), what your agenda is, and what you are saying to yourself. Then refocus in the next moment on something that causes you to feel good, so that you feel good in the next moment.

Always allow the last moment to become the past and over with as soon as you can. Memory is something that the thinking mind uses to hold you in the past. The more awakened you become, the less you will experience or be involved with memory. Memories are no longer important in the same way. Only now is important, not the past. You no longer project a memory impression onto what you're seeing or experiencing now just because you have an impression of it stored in your memory from the first second of experiencing it. Your thinking mind uses these impressions and gives you the illusion of them being real using imagination, instead of continuing to see the real thing, so it can keep you out of experiencing the moment. If you allow it to do this, you will

stay trapped in the internal 'thinking and imagining' loop I will go into detail about later in the book. Imagine if you were seeing your loved ones each time with no history, no preconceptions or expectations, no grudges or issues. Anything they did in the past that you perceived as hurtful has been let go, and you no longer carry a mental impression of those things with you. Do you think you would enjoy being with these people more? What if you really wanted to take the next step and decided to apply that strategy to looking at yourself with no history? Would you feel better about yourself? Deal only with the things that come up in any moment. If they don't come up, you don't need to deal with them, think about them, or give them any of your conscious attention.

Pay attention to how you're feeling. Your emotions give you clues as to where your attention is: past, present or future. When you are overtaken by thoughts of the past or future, you actually cease to exist in the present, and are instead living in your perceived memories or fearful future fantasies based on past remembrances. The more attention you give to the present moment, the more you will be able to hear or feel information that at one time you would not have been aware of. We receive so much information in any moment that virtually all your present-moment questions would be answered if you were present to experience it. There is far less reason to feel fear in the present moment than the thinking mind will convince you of. All the answers you seek at the level of awareness you are functioning at are at your disposal, but they're only available when you are open to the present moment through being present without imagination taking you elsewhere. Bring yourself into the present-moment experience. When you can do this, you do not need a teacher or some so-called guru to guide you. You already have everything you need already within you to connect to your concept of God, or whatever way you refer to universal consciousness, The One. You already have a direct line. You do not need a religious middleman or anyone else. The connection can only happen for you, through you, when you have total self-acceptance, and when you can be present in the moment most of the time.

The present, another name for the gift, is with you right now. When we resist, we prolong what needs to pass from our lives in order for us to move on. When we surrender and experience or let go of anything, it moves through and passes away quickly. When we resist, they persist. Stay in the moment and experience whatever it has to offer. Even if what you are experiencing appears to be painful, and I don't mean self-generated pain, and it will pass and be over. Acceptance is the only way to experience things and realise you have no need to be scared of them. They will come, and they will go, and then they will be over. We only resist experiences because we fear them. When you experience them, they will not be as you think, and they will be gone more quickly, leaving you with the gift of learning from the lesson presented. It will also show you that you have less to fear than you first thought, and give you more evidence that true trust and faith is possible.

Whatever the experience or fear, let it in. Let it be. Accept it with no label or judgement of it or yourself, and it will be over sooner. There is no carryover when you live in the moment. Once it's over, it's over forever, and then you are free to be open to new experiences. Just remember this: living and making decisions moment by moment allows you to be totally flexible and open to anything life offers without attachment or projection. Letting go of the thinking minds spell over you will free up so many resources that you will be able to spontaneously deal with anything life sends your way. Making moment-by-moment decisions becomes easy, much more effective, and enjoyable.

Become present during any activity no matter how mundane. Just experience that task as if you had never done it before. The 'you' that will be experiencing this activity is separate from the thinking you. When you are simply experiencing the moment, you can be free of the thinking mind. You can be totally conscious while not interacting with any of the thoughts that your mind will continue to have. You must not be disconnected, but totally present in the moment, and not listening to, or interacting with any of the internal chatter, or away somewhere in your imagination. That is certainly difficult for most people all over the world now, and especially for the so-called civilised Western thinking mind.

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