

Being in the Moment

*Do not act as if you had 1000 years to live.
Marcus Aurelius*

How much time do you spend planning your future? Do you dream of how happy you will be when everything finally works out? How much time do you spend reviewing the past? Do you keep replaying old experiences looking for what still needs to be healed, so that you can avoid repeating the same mistakes? How much time do you allow yourself to spend in the present moment?

Discussing this with a friend recently, it became obvious that we both spent most of our time either working towards creating things happening in the future, or over analyzing the past, in an effort to 'fix' ourselves. Even though we both knew the value of 'just being', we were just too busy! Realizing that we had to 'plan to be in the moment' had us rolling about in laughter!

This brings up some of the difficulties about having goals. It's tricky whenever you decide you want something, because it implies you're not happy with what you have, or that you are moving away from what you don't want. Reaching for a big dream can lead to unconscious comparisons with where you are now. Then, no matter how successful you are, you can feel like a failure. Having expectations that things should be a certain way almost always leads to disappointment. And during the whole time you're working towards what you want to happen in the future, when do you get to enjoy the present?

Plus, if your future goal is an attempt to make up for the past, you're probably focusing on previous experiences you want to avoid. Since what you focus on becomes your mindset, you could end up recreating the same problem. Maybe you know people who keep repeating the same problems again and again. But if you have no goals at all, the danger is that you might end up floundering – so what is the answer?

Setting goals can motivate you, help you focus your energy towards something positive, and create a direction that generates its own magnetic attraction. Putting your energy into an appropriate goal and letting go can magically manifest positive results. Where things go awry is when you over-focus on the outcome or get attached to having that goal. Whenever your desire to 'make it happen' takes over, you could become obsessive. Attachment, obsession and expectations are the real problem.

How can you tell if you've become too attached or obsessed with a goal? Easy. Just notice how happy and peaceful you feel. If you're too busy struggling and feeling stressed, chances are you've been very busy trying to make things happen. If you are feeling frustrated or disappointed or worried, it's time to let go. It's time to re-evaluate what is important. It's time to just be in the moment, accepting what is.

As John Lennon once said, 'Life is what happens when you were busy making plans'. Have you been guilty of thinking that you'd relax and live more fully in some distant future time, as if your life lasted 1000 years? Why not enjoy a little life right now? Take a breather, create some space wherever you are. Just be willing to notice what is going on around you, seeing it, hearing it, feeling it, smelling and tasting it. When you take care of each moment, the future takes care of itself.

*Don't change: Desire to change is the enemy of love.
Don't change yourselves: Love yourselves as you are.
Don't change others: Love all others as they are.
Don't change the world: It is in God's hands and he knows.
And if you do that, change will occur
Marvelously in its own way and in its own time
Yield to the current of life unencumbered by baggage.*
Anthony de Mello

Here is a wonderful exercise from NLP creator, John Grinder, for editing your personal history where choice points occurred:

Breath of Life

1. Think of a situation where you were not as resourceful as you'd like to have been. Locate the point where you made a choice about how to behave in that situation.
2. Then think what resource might have been helpful in that situation. Find a time in your life when you had a powerful experience of that helpful resource. While you relive that positive experience, pay attention to your breathing, and if you can, count the number of heartbeats on your inhalation/exhalation.
3. Memorize that breathing pattern – the speed, duration, location, depth etc. – and keep focusing on keeping your breathing in that pattern while you again review the situation from step one.
4. Sustain the breathing pattern while thinking through that choice point again. Perhaps you might want to edit that personal history.
5. Imagine how you could use this breathing pattern in future scenarios whenever you might have challenging choices to make.

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