



Why is it so Important to Live in the Present?

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I was recently asked why authors such as Eckhart Tolle, Deepak Chopra and Tony deMello (and myself for that matter) place so much emphasis on the present moment. My reader also asked me to explain why living in the past or future can be so detrimental - and that's where this article starts!

Very often, we look back on our past – fondly, with regret, sometimes with longing. There's no harm in that – after all, it is our life experience to date that makes us who we think we are. Without our memories, we'd wake up each morning, turn around in the bed and scream "Who the hell are you?" – of course, there could be benefits to that!

The real problem with the past is that our subconscious mind lives there by default. This is a major problem because psychology tells us that our subconscious mind (using the twin psychological "abilities" of automaticity and categorization – more like disabilities actually!) dictates our automatic reactions and enables us complete repetitive tasks without paying attention. Unfortunately, as we go through life and become accustomed to the people and places around us, everything becomes repetitive so we end up paying attention to nothing (research indicates that we only pay 1% attention to the here and now).

Here's the problem. By paying so little attention to the present, our subconscious mind roams freely in a past long gone – thinking that it's the present. It uses past experiences – our "programs" from our formative years, when we learned our beliefs in everything including ourselves – to dictate our current behaviour. How we behave now determines how people (who are buried in their own past) behave towards us and, as a result, our automatic behaviour creates our present everyday life.

Of course, we're completely unaware that any of this is going on, because we're not paying attention!

Now, to add to that mess, your conscious mind constantly wanders into the future. The average adult (most of us are average) has about 50,000 random thoughts each day, many of which are "what ifs"! The problem with a distracted mind is we lose focus on what we're supposed to be doing now. As a result, it becomes more of a burden, we become more frustrated.

So, between our subconscious's old programming (which is generally skewed towards the negative) and worry about the future, we end up not being present to what is actually happening here and now. We pay little or no attention to now – and recent neuro-psychological work has proven that

your ability to be successful (and experience peace of mind) is directly linked to how much attention you're paying. Put no energy into the present moment and you get nothing in return!

It's a bit like the old IT saying "garbage in – garbage out"! Quantum physics tells us that this universe of ours (including everything and everyone you encounter) is made up of energy and that energy responds to your energy. Put almost no energy into being focused in the present and universal energy simply won't bother to respond to you – why should it, you haven't even bothered to turn up!

On the other hand, when you do pay more than 1% attention to the present moment, your experience changes. Athletes call it "the zone", the University of Chicago calls it "flow", sports people call it "focus", business people call it "single-mindedness". Same difference! We're at our best when our energy is engrossed in what we're doing – here and now. When we are in flow, things flow for us – we seem to be the right person in the right place at the right time. The famous psychologist Carl Jung called that "synchronicity" – quantum physics has proved how synchronicity works in proving that universal energy is responsive to intention and emotion.

Put simply, if you channel more of your energy into "now", universal energy will respond now – these are scientific facts, if you want more details just let me know! Conversely, if my energy is "all over the place" (in the past and future) universal energy will give me a normal "not too bad" return on my pathetic 1% investment!

Whether you look at it from a psychological or physics perspective, the key benefit of the Now is this. If you are more present, you have presence – which makes you more impressive and attractive. You will impress those around you simply because there's more of you present in the moment than everybody else. You will be more attractive to those around you for the same reason. But, importantly, you will be more attractive to events as well (some people call it the Law of Attraction).

So, letting your subconscious live in the past – and letting your conscious mind wander – takes you away from the only time and place we have – Now. You need to learn how to pay more attention to now, to engross yourself in what you're doing. It's easy – meditation gives you the mental discipline required – but you could start by simply doing a little more seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling and tasting of where you are, right here, right now, as you finish reading this article.