

INNER HEALTH

If Not Now, When?

By Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC

"If I could only get a little breathing space." How often has that thought or a similar one occurred lately? Probably too frequently. Although you and I may not have met, I'll bet that: your desk is piled high with papers, you continually find yourself racing against the clock, you are deluged with projects and tasks right now.

If so, you are far from being alone. Most people today feel time-pressed. One of the most effective ways to alleviate the constant sense of pressure is by "living in the moment." What does living in the moment mean? It means living with vibrant expression and keen perception, with an intense awareness of what exists in your life. It's waking up each morning with the thought, "I'm alive, and this day is only starting."

Living in the moment means being aware of your power in the present, it is not a recipe for accomplishment. It is observing the finely woven canvas of your life while you are also living it. It is giving yourself permission to be who you are. It is resting when you are tired. It is not having to strive. It is allowing yourself breathing space.

Living in the moment does not mean taking a Pollyannaish approach to life, pretending that all is well. All is never well with anyone, at least not for long. Living in the moment doesn't mean acquiring a facade. You don't have to greet everyone you pass cheerfully. Freed from preoccupation that limits your experience of the present, however, you may feel like greeting everyone.

Living in the moment does not mean living for the moment or living to get to the next moment. It means total, unconditional acknowledgement that what is now, is your life; that now is the only moment there is. It isn't that you can't work to change things. It is that right now, this is how things are. For most people, how things are is not so bad, and how things can be is in reach.

Living for the moment does not mean "live for today"--- a well-intentioned, but shortsighted philosophy. Some time management experts

suggest pretending you only have six months to live. However, this exercise misses the mark. It would be silly to sell off your property and spend your savings if you have years to live. Living in the moment encompasses the truth about your life.

It does not mean, "get the most out of life;" there is no "most" to get. It does not mean, "make every minute count" -- an attitude which borders on obsessiveness.

Although the concept of living in the moment is primal, it is needed now more than ever. Too few individuals have any experience or knowledge of living in the moment. It is lost among a flurry of activity and "busy-ness." The overglut strangles it. Living in the moment remains

"There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening."

-Professor Marshall McLuhan

one of the least understood, least addressed, and least used human capabilities.

Years ago, Alan Watts explored living in the moment in his book, The Wisdom of Insecurity and observed that "human beings appear to be happy" when they have something to look forward to. Yet when that something arrives, "It is difficult to enjoy it to the fullest without some promise of more to come." The relentless quest to move on to what's next keeps you from fully enjoying what's here.

Preoccupation is elongated deliberation of what came before or what may be. Preoccupation with the past or the future blocks the experience of the present. Do you reminisce nostalgically about something or someone in your past even though back then, the experience was not nearly as pleasant? For reasons of adaptation, our memories retain positive

elements of certain experiences selectively. Longing for what you no longer have more strongly than reveling in what you do have is a guarantee for missing the present and all the magic it holds. Revel in what you have.

Must five years pass before you regard today with fondness? Can you accept that right now your life is taking place? Can you shout for joy for no reason? Can you give your life unconditionally?

You can now embark on a quest to live in the moment. Good or bad, the present moment is, in reality, all you have. It is the only point of power, the only moment in which action can be taken. Your ability to acknowledge and to live within it is a basic, satisfying human capability.

Living in the moment is the freedom to experience the essence and perfection of your life and what is now, even the aspects about now you may not like - a stumbling block for many.

Each of us faces many obstacles to living in the moment and having a full experience of the present. Clinging to victim status helps one avoid personal responsibility for existing in the present. Paying homage to ritual, a form of reinventing the past, limits the options of the present. The way you've always done it has little to do with how you might choose to do it now. Too much noise can block off your experience - you need some quiet.

Failure to live in the moment condemns you to never feeling in control of your life. Life controls you rather than the other way around.

Accept the present moment as it is, and for what it is -- the most important moment in your life. How fortunate if you're happy or content right now, because now has the greatest importance. Nothing else exists.

© Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC. All Rights Reserved. www.breathingspace.com