



red dandelion
COACHING

HOW TO TAP INTO THE RICHES OF LIVING IN THE NOW

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle is—apparently—a great book. It's an international best seller with over 2 million copies sold. Many people find it inspirational. My copy however, is only half read. I find the writing style heavy – one day I will finish it! What is the point of telling you about this book? Because the topic is a key part to self-development and spiritual growth. Because you might love it! But most of all being able to live 'in the now' is incredibly powerful and yet to most people (including me) it is challenging. So, today's Tip looks at living in the present, discovering the benefits, and how to begin being fully conscious, truly alive and present in your life.

Where does your mind most like to reside?



Where did your mind spend most of its time today? Did it keep drifting into the future, seeing yourself having 'that conversation', the one you're planning to have with your partner/boss/child or friend? Did you think about your holiday, next week's BBQ, or the car you dream of owning? Or did your mind spend most of its time replaying 'that conversation', the one that didn't go very well? Or maybe you re-ran the video in your mind of a delightful evening? Our thoughts go backwards and forwards constantly. Most people have a default mode: some people live mostly in the past, others in the future. Very few people live most of their time in the

present. Living in the present means living TODAY, being fully alive, right now and enjoying every minute no matter what is showing up in our lives. We have all experienced how wonderful it can be when we are present at a time of happiness. It comes naturally when we experience beauty or joy that is so amazing to us, it takes our breath away. In that instant, nothing else exists, no past, no future. You are in your body, conscious of only what you are experiencing right now – this is being totally present.

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Why living in the present is so important

When your mind is wandering into your past, ask yourself why you are looking backwards. Do you need to understand something that you may have missed? Are you re-running a conversation or event so you can edit it: say or do what you meant to say or do to feel better? Some analysis of past events can be helpful, but no amount of thinking can change what happened. For sure, you can change your perspective of it (often useful for troubling events)† and you can change how you feel about it. But the event itself that stays the same. How much time and energy of your life is being spent on events that you can not change? When you are day dreaming of the future, again ask yourself why. Are you dreaming of having lots of money because your credit card statement is so depressing? Are you thinking about your summer holiday because your life is not pleasing to you? Whilst I strongly recommend visualization – seeing in your mind's eye your potential future – it is also important to stay grounded in today. The future has not happened yet: the Universe may have all kinds of surprises up it's sleeve that may completely change what it is you want and need. So check-in with yourself, how much time and energy are you spending on events that may not even be appropriate tomorrow? When you bring yourself back into the present – today – you become grounded. When you are floating in either the past or the future then truly knowing and accepting what's really happening around you and to you, is difficult. A lot of people don't want to accept their lot: hence they 'escape' in their minds. And yet the richness of life is in the now. Let's look at this further.

The present is perfect (even in all it's imperfections!)

This is a challenging idea for most people to take on board. People say, if I have a mountain of debt, how can that be perfect? If someone I love is seriously ill, how can that be perfect? If I've just been sacked... and so on. It's not easy, but everything in life is open to interpretation. The person who decides how something really is, is YOU. No-one can tell you that if this-and-this happens to you, it means this (and only this) and you must react/respond/deal with it like this. How you react or respond may be influenced by family, society and the media, but YOU choose how you see your life and how you deal with it. In other words you can choose to see it's perfection, beauty, and wonderful gifts it is giving you; or you can choose to see doom-and-gloom, and blame everyone else and refuse to take responsibility. Let me show you a few examples that are 'challenging' my clients to see the gifts of living in the present.

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A teenage son comes home late one night really drunk. He staggers upstairs and is sick in the bathroom. Next morning when asked about it, his language is abusive. My client is almost pulling her hair out. This is just one of his less-than-angelic behaviours that is driving her crazy. Her mind goes back to the 'lovely boy' he used to be and to the future when he will fly from the nest and leave her in peace. What is the gift, the perfection of the present moment? This teenage boy is teaching my client about personal boundaries, the art of communication in difficult circumstances, and helping her redefine her role as a mother. A less troublesome son would not teach her these powerful lessons. Today it is perfect because these lessons are being learnt. The gift is realizing that he won't be a teenager forever and seeing that beneath the angst there is probably still a bond of love.

A client has just found out that her husband has been having an affair for almost a year. She blames it all on him. He has strayed. It's his fault. What is perfect in amongst this pain? A chance to look at her relationship with fresh eyes. Recognize the affair is probably the result of a break-down in communication, a lack of respect for each other, and personal needs not being met. Most likely there are 2 troubled people in this marriage. The perfection of today is the chance to learn things that will help her rebuild her marriage, or in time, enter a new relationship with a lot more wisdom.

No matter what challenges the Universe brings to you – even the real yucky stuff – there is always a gift. It's not always easy to see, recognize, or even deal with it. BUT, it's always there if you chose to find it.

How to start living in the present

It begins with noticing everything. It means seeing, hearing, feeling, touching, smelling, tasting, sensing everything around you. Most of us don't do that very often. We live our lives like we're on a giant hamster wheel. Breakfast eaten whilst reading a paper, watching the TV or even travelling to work. Our To Do lists keeping us busy – often longer than our contracted work hours. Parents with young children juggling complex logistics for taking and picking-up their children. And after dinner, many people collapse into a sofa exhausted and allow the TV to distract them from being present.

If this is typical of your day, ask yourself what did you notice today – for yourself, at work, and with others? If the day above is typical for you, perhaps you might like to live

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consciously tomorrow? When you have breakfast – notice how hungry you are. What does your food taste and smell like? What does your body need? At work, what areas of your job are you loving and doing well? What don't you like? What does your body feel when you're at work? And at home?

Try this little exercise too. Take 5 minutes out of your day. Sit perfectly still for while. Now consciously notice everything. What can you see, hear, smell and feel? Is it quiet or noisy, hot or cold, are the people friendly or aggressive and so on. Now notice YOU. What is your body feeling? Mentally scan your body from toes to the crown of your head. How tired are you? Is your body comfortable or tense? What about emotionally? Is your body holding on to unexpressed emotions (check your tummy – is it knotted: check your shoulders and neck are they tight?).

Here is another exercise when you are outside. Choose something of nature. Perhaps a flower. Notice the petals, leaves, colour, scent, and it's form. Notice where and how it's growing. If you haven't done this exercise before, it can be really challenging as within minutes your mind is likely to go running off in many directions. Have patience. If you do this regularly, your mind will start to notice even more and find calmness and acceptance of what is happening now.

Mediation when it focuses on 'being present' or on your breathing (some mediation practices encourage you to travel out of your body) is a great way to be grounded and be present now. Qi Gong (Ch'i Kung), Pilates and yoga are also great ways to become grounded and present.

Wise words

Thomas Leonard (the founder of CoachU) wrote: *It's been said that each of us attracts what we need to learn or what we're ready for. Does this mean that all of the people, opportunities, interests, and even challenges or limitations in our lives are perfect? Well, yes. (This can be a difficult notion to agree with. But do try it on.)*

Does this mean then, that those people or conditions in our lives which are hurting us, or are not good, should be in our lives? Well, no. The lesson here is that what life has given you, life has given you. No one says what you have today is what you will have tomorrow. And no one says you should keep what you've been given.

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Who really knows why life has given you what it has? The key point is that you got what you did, and what you have probably won't leave or stay, whichever is better for you, until you accept that the Universe was right for giving it to you in the first place. In the moment you do accept this, you free whatever it is you've been given to either stick around or leave, whichever is better for you. It's that simple.

So why do we resist or even deny what we've been given? No one has all of the answers, but just knowing that you are resistant to accepting what you've been given is a first step. Is there something in your life that you don't view as perfect? Is it your job? Your love life? Your financial picture? Your health? If there is (and I'm sure there is), you've probably been trying to do something about it, right? You might have even said to yourself, "It's not right that I didn't get that raise or I have to lose those 25 pounds!" What if, instead, you just accepted your present situation and declared the Universe right for giving you what it has given you? Does this mean you should just give up and eat sugar cookies for breakfast? Not at all. You should still go to the gym, but go with an accepting and perhaps even grateful attitude towards your body, rather than bitterness and resentment towards those thighs you inherited from Aunt Edna.

Then, your workout plans will work out, and life is more likely to bring you what you really want. The point here is to stop resisting what the Universe has given you. You don't have to like what you've been given in order to accept what you've been given. Because by accepting what you've been given, what you've been given no longer controls you.

...and finally

I have many, many different ways to help you – no matter if you think it's hopeless, that you're at a cross-roads and don't know which way to go, or you're in a rut, or stuck in the mud, or hitting brick walls – these don't faze me! I can help you change and live in the NOW! All you need is a heart felt desire and a willingness to experiment doing things in a new way. Call me on **01305 772220**, or on 0845 8386 733 (lo call rate) or email me, jennie@reddandelion.co.uk to book a trial coaching session.

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