



Living in the Moment

How often have you driven to the mall, work, or back home without really thinking about it or eaten a meal and not really savored it?

Days can pass by while our minds are elsewhere, common in ambitious go-getter business owners who are often thinking about the next step. Yet, life unfolds in the here and now but we allow it to slip away worrying instead about the future and rehashing the past.

According to a Psychology Today article, The Art of Now, living in the moment—also called mindfulness—is a state of open, intentional attention on the present. When you become mindful, you realize that you are not your thoughts. You actually become an *observer* of your thoughts from moment to moment without judging them. Mindfulness involves being with your thoughts as they are, neither grasping at them nor pushing them away.

There are many benefits to cultivating a nonjudgmental awareness. Living in the moment can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and boost immune functioning. People who are living in the moment:

- are happier, more exuberant, empathetic, and secure;
- can hear negative feedback without feeling threatened;
- fight less with their romantic partners; and
- are more accommodating and less defensive.

For many years, I found it difficult to live in the moment. I had all of this energy frequently thinking about the next step and moving through each moment. Over the years, I've worked on being more present. I've even learned to drive in the moment turning off the radio and cell phone. I've noticed things that have probably been there for years but see them for the first time.

While it takes practice to live in the moment, throughout the years, I've found the following tricks helpful:

Loosen up. Giving a speech? Don't think too hard about what you're actually doing or being perfect at it. This will just make you more anxious. Focusing on the present takes away that self-evaluation allowing yourself to let go.

Savor the Moment. Finding yourself with your family yet still connected to your cell phone? Shut it off completely and enjoy the conversation. Savor each moment asking questions and using it as an opportunity to find out more about the other person and their interests.



Go with the Flow. Do you find yourself having to control every aspect of your day? Take a vacation from it all and allow yourself to go with the flow. If you usually pick the movie or the restaurant allow others to make the choices and go with it.

Accept What Is. We all have irritants in our lives, whether it is sudden anxiety when we have to give a speech or the visiting relative who critiques everything from the holiday food to the décor. The mind's tendency is to avoid it or focus on the negative feelings causing more stress. Sometimes things are beyond your control. You can just embrace the feeling for what it is. It doesn't mean that you have to like what is happening or you are resigned to it. It simply is what it is.

Becoming mindful at any moment, takes practice. You become more mindful of the moment just by paying attention to your immediate experience. You can do it right now. What is happening in this instant? Just observe the moment. What do you see, hear, and smell? Just notice but don't judge it or form an opinion.

Start today. Set the intention of paying attention to what is happening in your present moment.

When you find yourself distracted, anticipating what someone will say or judging what someone has said, focus on your breathing to bring yourself back to the moment feeling yourself breathe in and out. Living in the moment is not a goal or a destination. You're already there. Something quite remarkable happens when you're in the moment. Often times, the very thing you've been wishing for arrives all because you were present to hear it.

Lisa Mininni is Best-Selling Author of *Me, Myself, and Why? The Secrets to Navigating Change* and President of Excellerate Associates, home of The Entrepreneurial Edge System, the only developmental and marketing program helping small business owners fill their business in record time.