

The Power of Now

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh, NC. Chris Abbate, July 25, 2016 –

Chalice Lighting & Opening Thought:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour

~ from Auguries of Innocence by William Blake, English poet and painter, 1757-1827

Exercise

When you think of the phrases “living in the moment,” “seizing the moment,” or “the power of now” what ideas, thoughts, words, or memories does it conjure for you?

Topic: The Power of Now (published in 1997, by Eckhart Tolle, born 1948)

The eternal present is the space within which your whole life unfolds, the one factor that remains constant. Life is now. There was never a time when your life was not now, nor will there ever be.

Nothing ever happened in the past; it happened in the Now. Nothing will ever happen in the future; it will happen in the Now.

Within the sphere of practical living, where we cannot do without reference to the past and future, the present moment remains the essential factor. Any lesson from the past becomes relevant and is applied now. Any planning as well as working toward achieving a particular goal is done now.

Seen from a higher perspective, conditions are always positive. To be more precise, they are neither positive nor negative. They are as they are. And when you live in complete acceptance of what is – which is the only way to live – there is no “good” or “bad” in your life anymore. There is only a higher good – which includes the “bad.” Seen from the perspective of the mind, however, there is good-bad, like-dislike, love-hate.

The enlightened person’s main focus of attention is always the Now, but they are still peripherally aware of time. In other words, they continue to use clock time but are free of psychological time.

To be free of time is to be free of the psychological need of the past for your identity and future for your fulfillment. It represents the most profound transformation of consciousness that you can imagine. What I call ordinary unconsciousness means being identified with your thought processes and emotions, your reactions, desires and aversions. It is most people’s normal state. In that state, you are run by the egoic mind, and you are unaware of being.

You are cut off from Being as long as your mind takes up all your attention. When this happens you are not in your body. The mind absorbs all your consciousness and transforms it into mind stuff. You cannot stop thinking. Compulsive thinking has become a collective disease. Your whole sense of who you are is then derived from mind activity. Your identity, as it is no longer rooted in Being, becomes a vulnerable and ever-needy mental construct, which creates fear as the predominant underlying emotion. The one thing that truly matters is then missing from your life: awareness of your deeper self – your invisible and indestructible reality.

Ordinary unconsciousness is always linked in some way with denial of the Now. The Now, of course, also implies the here. Are you resisting your here and now? Some people would always rather be somewhere else. Their “here” is never good enough. Through self-observation, find out if that is the case in your life. Wherever you are, be there totally.

Find the “narrow gate that leads to life.” It is called the Now. Narrow your life down to this moment. Your life situation may be full of problems – most life situations are – but find out if you have any problems at this moment. Not tomorrow or in ten minutes, but now. Do you have a problem now?

If you keep your attention in the body as much as possible, you will be anchored in the Now. You won’t lose yourself in the external world, and you won’t lose yourself in your mind. Thoughts and emotions, fears and desires, may still be there to some extent, but they won’t take you over.

Questions for Discussion:

In what ways do you experience the present moment? Can you explain how it feels?

What types of activities bring you into this state? When do you find you are most present, most aware and fully experiencing the present moment?

What types of things distract you from experiencing this awareness?

Do you believe that “conditions are always positive,” or are “neither positive nor negative?”

Have there been periods in your life when you were more present, or less present to the moment?

Have you ever considered God as the present moment, the awareness of the Now?

Closing Thoughts:

Use your senses fully. Be where you are. Look around. Just look, don’t interpret. See the lights, shapes, colors, textures. Be aware of the silent presence of each thing. Be aware of the space that allows everything to be. Listen to the sounds; don’t judge them. Listen to the silence under the sounds. Touch something – anything – and feel and acknowledge its Being. Observe the rhythm of your breathing; feel the air flowing in and out, feel the life energy inside your body. Allow everything to be, within and without. Allow the “isness” of all things. Move deeply into the Now.
~ Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*

Be happy in the moment, that's enough. Each moment is all we need, not more.
~ Mother Teresa

If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath.
~ Amit Ray, Om chanting meditation