

LIVE *in the* NOW

TO RECEIVE THE
GIFT OF THE PRESENT



A GOLDEN DOOR Publication



LIVING IN THE MOMENT IS NOT ALWAYS EASY

Our thoughts often race to meet the demands of daily living. We think work and family responsibilities, electronic communications, this meeting, that emergency and a host of others things. Often in the midst of trying to focus on one task, we think ahead to the next one and the ones after that.

*What might happen if we stopped living in the future
or the past, and focused on the present?*

At Golden Door Spa in Southern California, concerns about the future and past slip away over the course of the first few days of a stay. Guests feel empowered by the slowing of the clock's hands, and renew their ability to reposition themselves at the center of their own lives by tending to their bodies, minds and spirits. A serene setting, nutritious food and world-class exercise bring new insights into life's gifts in the here and now.





MULTITASKING

In a 2001 University of Michigan study, researchers found that when we multitask, our brains either constantly switch between tasks or allot only a portion of cognitive capacity to a specific task. Even brief mental blocks created by task-switching can take up as much as 40 percent of someone's productive time.

Harvard researchers, in a 2008 study, discovered almost half of our thoughts are *not* related to what we're doing. They also found that when people are fully present for an activity, they are much happier than when they think about something unrelated.

BENEFITS TO LIVING IN THE MOMENT

Active, intentional attention to the present does not stop your thoughts and emotions, but helps you notice them without judgment. Known also as mindfulness, living in the moment is a component of Buddhism, Taoism, many Native American traditions, and yoga. Studies find that, overall, being present increases happiness and empathy, improves memory, builds resilience and develops a sense of self. Taking time to be present has been found to help reduce stress, boost immune functioning, reduce chronic pain, lower blood pressure and, ultimately, reduce the risk of heart disease.



SIX COMPONENTS OF MINDFULNESS

Psychological studies identify and discuss in-depth elements associated with being present; a brief summary follows.

- **Reduce self-consciousness**—Don't overthink; let a task play out without taking evaluations or pressures personally.
- **Savor**—Avoid worry about the future; let your senses experience the moment.
- **Breathe**—Respond thoughtfully rather than automatically.
- **Flow**—To make the most of time, lose track of it by being engrossed in a task that is intrinsically rewarding, such as playing an instrument, rock climbing, or reading.
- **Acceptance**—If something bothers you, move toward it rather than away from it. Face negative situations; feel the emotions and accept that you cannot change the circumstances.
- **Engagement**—Notice new things; see the world with fresh eyes and realize that even with the familiar, almost everything is different each time.



HOW DO WE TRAIN OUR MIND TO WANDER LESS?

*Try Harvard Health's four-step meditation that's
like a fitness routine for your brain.*

- **Relax**—Find a quiet space, sit up straight but not stiff; allow your head and shoulders to rest comfortably; place your hands on the tops of your legs with upper arms at your side.
- **Breathe**—Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Feel the rise and fall of your chest and the expansion and contraction of your belly. With each breath, follow its natural flow.
- **Focus**—Thoughts will try to pull your attention away from the breath. Notice them, but don't pass judgment. Gently return your focus to your breath. Some people count their breaths as a way to stay focused.
- **Take 10**—A daily practice will provide the most benefits. It can be 10 minutes per day, however, 20 minutes twice a day is often recommended for maximum benefit.

“Your outer journey may
contain a million steps;
your inner journey only has one:
the step you are taking right now.”

— *Eckhart Tolle*



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