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## How to Live in the Here and Now

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**Note to Readers:** *This free e-newsletter, sent only upon request, comes from Dr. Kathleen Begley, owner of Write Company Plus communications training. She writes weekly on topics connected to business and personal success. Dr. Begley recently launched a new blog called "Meandering to a Different Drummer." Click onto the website address at the end of this article to read her musings on life, death, and how to deal with your in laws.*

For many years, I have noticed a tendency among human beings – especially me – to feel grateful for something only after it's gone. The client who chose another consultant. The friend who moved across the country. The shopkeeper who closed her doors. I mourned them all. I still find myself falling into the same emotional trap, which is why I'm resolving in 2010 to appreciate what I have – while I still have it.

For me, this goal is far more difficult than starting an exercise program, curbing my spending, or learning a new language. Compared to the resolutions I just mentioned, mine is infinitely more vague – and, darn it, maddeningly elusive. Yet my objective is hardly unique. In fact, when I typed "Live in the Moment" into my computer search engine, I got more than 3 million hits – can you believe it? There were a bazillion quotations on the topic from thinkers who lived in the far distant past.

Abraham Maslow, one of the most respected psychologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wrote, "The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness." Ralph Waldo Emerson, a poet you probably studied in high school, said "We are always getting ready to live, but never really living." Dale Carnegie, usually credited as the founder of motivational training, believed, "Today is life – the only life we are really sure of. Make the most of today." And my favorite quote of all, from Johann Wolfgang Goethe, a noted German philosopher and author, "Nothing is worth more than this day."

Jay Dixit, a senior editor at Psychology Today magazine, wrote an article last year called "The Art of Now." He recently posted a follow-up on the Internet about efforts to adhere to his own advice. "Whenever I feel upset or worried, I try to bring myself to the present," Dixit writes. "And, whenever it occurs to me, I take a few mindful breaths, look at my surroundings, and become aware of the moment. I still have a long way to go, but I'm living less in my head and more in the moment than ever before – and I can feel the difference."

I'm hoping the same for myself in 2010. Some tips for me and for you that I've come up in extensive reading on this concept:

**Create a reminder.** When you find yourself regretting yesterday and fretting about tomorrow, devise a way to pull yourself back into the here and now. You can take this idea literally by wearing a rubber band on your wrist and giving yourself a little snap when your mind wanders.

**Get a visual.** For Christmas, I bought myself a gift tying in with this theme. It's a green rectangular nightlight etched with the following words: "Quiet Your Mind." For me, that message means stopping myself from thinking about real and imagined problems from yesterday or into tomorrow. I stare at it nightly while falling asleep.



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**Find a buddy.** By telling a friend about your live-in-the-moment goal, that person may be able to reel you in when you go off obsessing about a horrible event that may – or may not – happen two, five, 10 years down the road. Ditto if you are still moaning about your divorce 20 years ago.

**Keep a journal.** Writing down all the things you're grateful for is a great way to remain in the present rather than in the past or the future. Regarding time to come, it's impossible to be thankful for something that has not yet happened.

**Slow down.** Instead of continually racing to the next thing, enjoy this thing. If you're among millions of Americans currently looking for a job, for example, focus all your attention on each word of your resume, rather than your resentment about losing your last position or your fears about landing your next one.

**Observe your surroundings.** Years ago, I read an article by a woman who was dreaming about a trip to China. Somewhere during the planning stages, she realized that she regularly rode the bus with Asian immigrants – but never talked to them. When she began engaging fellow passengers in conversation, she found she learned more about Shanghai and Beijing than she ever dreamed possible.

**Focus on your current task.** Buddhists call this habit mindfulness. If you're washing your face, for instance, pay close attention to how the soap slides in your hands, the water tingles on your skin, the suds smell on your cheeks. Imagine how you might react if you knew this was the last time you would ever experience this sensation. That realization alone, say people wiser than I, is likely to jolt you from what was, and what could be, to what is.

*Dr. Kathleen Begley has written seven books and gives corporate seminars on topics such as writing persuasively, presenting confidently, and managing positively. You can call her at 610-429-1562 or e-mail her at [KBegley@writecompanyplus.com](mailto:KBegley@writecompanyplus.com). She responds to everybody.*