

HEALTHY MINDS ACHIEVE MORE



The Art of Being in the Moment Tip Sheet

By Michelle McArthur-Morgan

The Art of Being in the Moment

Your Five Top Tips

One of the most frequent comments I hear is that "I think that everything you say about the importance of being in the moment is so true, but I just cannot do it, I have tried and failed, I cannot get my mind to stop."

So here to help you get started are my five top tips:

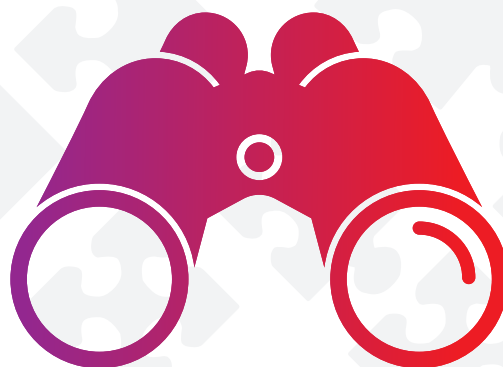
1. Live your life in High Resolution

Many people go through life not really noticing what is going on all around them, whether it be a beautiful sunrise, the fabulous smell of fresh coffee, a remark made by a colleague or a small detail in a company report. Because of the busyness of the world in which we live and work, many people are living their lives in low resolution.

To start living life in high resolution to make the most of life and the world around you, start to see the world with a fresh pair of eyes. All too often when something becomes familiar, we stop seeing it, we believe we know what it is and what it looks, smells, tastes, and feels like so we stop paying attention. We miss vital information, stop appreciating and miss out on many great pleasures that we could be experiencing.

So, start looking at the world around you, stop what you are doing and take note of the familiar. I am sure that if I asked you to describe a Malteser, most of you would say it was round, and brown, but are they, have you noticed they are not all perfectly round, they come in different sizes with lumps and bumps, they are not just brown they are different shades, they change taste as you eat them and they leave an after taste which some people love and other not so. Next time you have a box of Maltesers don't just pop a handful into your mouth, stop and take a moment to look at them, note the differences, the smell and the tastes!

Practising seeing the world through a fresh pair of eyes can be fun, especially if you use Maltesers as your training aid, because like learning any new skill, you need to keep on practising, once is not enough. (For those of you who cannot or prefer not to use Maltesers, you can use any familiar object, event or experience such as a walk through the park, a picture or painting in your house)



2. Savour the moment

Spending time in the moment, is good for your mental health as it can help to reduce stress and anxiety. When we become trapped in thoughts about the future it is easy to start ruminating and our thoughts just run away with themselves. The human mind is programmed for survival and therefore has a slightly negative bias, so when we think about the future, the unknown, it is natural for the mind to start to focus on the things which may go wrong or may be harmful to us. By being trapped in our thoughts we forget to experience what is going on right here and right now?



Which may be something rewarding and pleasurable and so yet again we can miss out on the things which are good about our life and be consumed by the worry of what might be.

A technique that has served me well through some of the toughest moments of my life was something I learnt from leadership guru George Kohlrieser, talking about a time when he was taken hostage and the only way he was going to walk away from the situation was by remaining calm and retaining control of his rational mind, not allowing his fight or flight to kick in and his emotional brain to take over. The way he did this was by talking to himself, keeping his mind focused on the present moment, moment to moment, by saying to himself,

“Right here, right now, I’m Ok. Right here right now, I’m alive.”

Hopefully most of you will never be faced with such a traumatic experience as having a gun held to your head and if it can work under such extreme conditions then there is no reason why it cannot work for you. I have certainly used this technique very successfully and recommend giving it a try. Practice using the technique when you start to feel anxious or worried about something, savour the moment, moment by moment.

3. Check in with Yourself

Every 90 minutes or thereabouts the human mind needs a short break, just a couple of minutes is all it takes to refresh the mind. These short breaks are the perfect time to check in with yourself, check where your focus is and bring yourself back into the present.

To help you establish the habit of checking in with yourself and bring you back into the present moment the use of alarms and reminders are a valuable aid. If you have a Fitbit (or similar device), setting a silent alarm can be a great way of reminding yourself. Alternatively setting an alarm on your phone, or PC may be appropriate.

When checking in with yourself, take note where your focus was prior to taking the break and then bring your mind into the present moment and focus on what you are feeling/experiencing, right now in the present moment - too hot? too cold? energized? weary?, anxious? etc. Regular short breaks and checking in with yourself, will help to increase your ability to focus and be present, as well as helping to increase your awareness and understanding of self.



4. Stop thinking too Hard

Lack of being present in the moment can lead to a deep overthinking of things, which because of the negative bias of the human mind, usually leads to focusing on the worst case scenario and all of the things which can go wrong. This often results in making the situation worse, as stress and anxiety levels increase which can then impact negatively on performance.

If you become aware of getting caught up in your thoughts and ruminating about a situation:

- Stop, be aware that your focus is on the mental chatter in your head, which is not serving you well

- Move your focus to being in the present moment, take note of all that is going on around you, be part of the present moment, right there right now
- Then ask yourself, are the thoughts you were having logical? What evidence is there to support your thoughts? What can you do that will serve you well at that moment?

5. Practice, Practice and more Practice

Build in a few minutes a day, to practice focusing on the present moment and increasing your attentional intelligence:

- Find a suitable place where you feel comfortable and at ease and won't be disturbed
- Bring your focus to your thoughts, what are you thinking right now?
- Then move your focus onto your body. Are there any feelings of tension or relaxation? Any aches? And where do you feel these sensations?
- Then notice your environment, what do you see, hear, taste, smell, touch? Who can you see or hear?
- Lastly ask yourself how are you feeling now that you have awareness of the present moment?

Remember that how you are feeling is based upon your interpretation of what is going on around you. Nothing or nobody makes you feel a certain way, it is all about how you choose to interpret what you are experiencing and how you choose to react to it.



If you would like to find out more about the art of being in the present moment and how attentional intelligence can lead to increased wellbeing and performance, we offer various inhouse and open workshops and seminars.

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