

Being in the Present Moment/Be Here Now

I was playing a rather involved and somewhat complex game of cards with a few friends the other day and one of the friends brought a new player in the game. We patiently explained the suits, objective and the rules of the game and said by all means ask questions and try not to get frustrated as it may take a few times of playing to really get used to the cards and the nature of the game. During the first few games, this person was visibly frustrated by the complexity of the game and we just gave them the time they needed and answered any questions. After the third game, I could see how a misunderstanding of part of the game had them bewildered. I tried to offer assistance but this person refused to bring their mind into a listening mind (present moment) and instead kept insisting how the cards were marked inappropriately and how that screwed up their whole hand by not being able to organize and see what was in their hand. I wanted to help them and explain what I thought they were having trouble with, but the same thoughts and **victim stories kept digging a deeper groove into their mind complex and the same reasoning kept being told over and over.** It was hard to watch because we all could see what was going on; their mind could not let go of what it perceived as confusion or how it *thought the suites should look like*, to be in the present moment of listening and learning. This person was stuck! I could not get them from looping over the same story of how the cards were confusing to look at so that I could give them a tip on how to discriminate the difference in the cards.

The greatest gift of my recovery process was finding a way to live in the present moment. I really had no concept of what my personality was going to be like when I was sober. And I knew that the victim part of me was not going to help at all to get sober or happy so I decided to try just living moment by moment, day by day and explore the opportunities that arose for me. I had a poster size quote hanging on my studio wall which became my motto; ***When I let go of who I am, I become who I might be.*** It was written by Lao Tzu. This teaching by Lao Tzu reminded and allowed me to let go of my past stories and be present in the moment. I really started to connect with life. I connected with nature. I no longer rushed through the woods to get exercise and breathe in fresh air. Instead I started to connect with Mother Earth with each step I took in the woods. I would stop and lean against a tree and send my roots down next the tree's roots. And each breathe I took was celebrated in blessings. I decided to take up pottery something I have always wanted to learn but did not have the time. I had all kinds of time now since I was free of the limitations of my addiction. I took my time in the garden feeling the ground beneath my feet; I no longer had to hurry so I could satisfy my addiction. I started Hatha Yoga which is the most beautiful way to connect with your own body, breath and soul. There was so much of life that I no longer wanted to miss by always being in the mode of grasping and needing a fix. Life became worth connecting with! That really is what *being in the present moment* is all about; connecting with life rather than trying to control life with all your desires and outdated attitudes.

Letting go of our past stories does not mean we are to bury them or forget them, it means to process them and heal them when the time and the space is right, loving and accepting. Healing our past stories does not come from letting them aimlessly dig trenches in your psyche. Nor does it come from burying our hurts of the past, hoping they go away and not show face again. So in my story above, by letting go of my past stories as I walked through everyday life, the intention was not to try to bury my past experiences and somehow minimize their effects on my life, instead I made time and space to be in loving presence with them to heal them. I chose to let them come up in a gentle way when I was doing physical postures of yoga, practicing mindfulness, connecting with nature, and meditation. Therefore I was choosing to see my hurts as they were in an accepting, listening and compassionate state. That is how we process our hurts and emotions. Sometimes our hurts show up at inappropriate times, what do we do then? If you don't have the time right then to sit with them and heal them, then maybe you can write them down and give yourself permission and the time to be with them later in a loving way. This may take time and maturity to recognize our hurts and then to want to bring them up later to heal, but the more you start to be present with yourself in a loving and accepting manner, the easier and more conscious it becomes. Teachings and experience has led me to believe that you can talk all you want about your old wounds but until you are deeply and fully present with them in a compassionate and accepting setting, you will not fully heal. Yoga allows us to see our proclivities, our hurts, our gifts in a healing light rather than a constant loop of victimization. I will ask you over and over in Santosha Recovery to try to let go of your stories and be in the present moment. When the time is right, and you are ready, your inner guidance will help you heal your past

stories through tarka (reflection), thorough insights, through crystals, through divination cards, mediation and the many other whole body healing modalities. Healing from your old hurts in this subtle gentle way of self-awareness, acceptance, and compassionate love gives you the necessary skills to move through life with ease, wholeness and self empowering mastery.

When we are truly in the present moment, we are not looking at life through a filtered lens. This filtered lens may be *rose colored glasses* lens or *I am a victim* lens. This lens is filtered or flavored towards whatever judgment you are choosing to see the view of life in at the moment. I live in Minnesota where the winters can get pretty long and one day this last spring it was snowing out with these big beautiful gentle flakes. I paused and just stared out the window completely mesmerized and calmed by the gentleness of the falling snow; until my *its been a really long winter here in Minnesota and I am tired of the snow*, lens got put on the camera. There went the peaceful enjoying the present moment, moment! When I was looking at life with no filter and in the present moment, I was peaceful, calm, and happy, but as soon as I put the *really long winter* lens on, I got frustrated, gloomy and left the present moment scene to find something else to please and occupy my mood. When we are in the present moment, we see life as it is, with all its intricacies and beauty.

Each lens that we look through has a voice. This voice inside our head never stops unless we mindfully and intentionally decide to take control and be totally present in the moment. And of course that takes practice. And if you are right now thinking, *I don't have a voice inside my head*, that is the voice I am talking about. The goal of yoga is to start watching that voice rather than being caught up in being that voice. When we can do that we have evolved spiritually but also we become self-aware, the very first step on the path to santosha. There is a terrific book that changed my life by **Micheal J. Singer, titled *The Untethered Soul, the journey beyond yourself***. In this book, Micheal says 'Come to know the one who watches the voice, and you will come to know the great mysteries of creation.' But Micheal wasn't the first to recognize this, instead he gets this message from the ancient yogis in which the practice of meditation is to know the knower. We are not our thoughts (neti, neti, neti)* and the goal is not to associate ourselves with our thoughts, but start to see our thoughts and the voice inside our heads as products of our environment, what we last watched on television, our past experiences, how much sleep we got last night, and what emotional state we are in. We are really layers removed from our thoughts. **We are actually consciousness that experiences life through whatever lens we chose to put on in the moment.**

The goal of yoga is to be able to rest in pure conscious awareness without any lens so that we can see life as it really is.

Here are some practices to help you practice being in the present moment and removing the filters and the voice inside our heads:

- Loving Awareness practice*
- Hatha Yoga
- Mindful eating
- Vipassana meditation*
- Neti, Neti, Neti practice*
- Take a walk in nature with your explorer's hat on. Try to let go of your to do list and your narrating mind so you can connect with Mother Earth with each step you take.
- Get involved or start a new project that takes great attention, where you can keep focused and in the moment.
- A beautiful *tarka* (reflection) practice might be to start becoming aware of when your old stories keep you from enjoying and just being in the present moment? How often do the past wounds that we carry with us everyday, prohibit the possibility of new stories to be created?

* These practices are described on santosharecovery.org under Techniques,

In the Present moment there is only bliss. Even when the moment is sad, when you connect with it deeply, it holds the key to compassion, acceptance and santosha. Be though blessed, be though blessed, be though triply blessed and find joy in each moment. Shanti