

Live In The Journey, Not For The Destination

By Karen Newquist, CPCC, ACC

Mary Anne came to me last year when she felt totally “trapped.” She had achieved many of her life goals –successful career, financial stability, beautiful home, and a healthy & functional family. She knew she should be happy and enjoying her financially comfortable lifestyle. Instead, she felt exhausted, under appreciated, and internally hollow.

She was tired of feeling like all decision-making responsibilities at work and home fell onto her shoulders. Her daily life ran according to her scheduled calendar, and she found it hard to relax even if she scheduled pampering time for herself. She repeatedly described herself as exhausted and alone. She wanted a way out, but didn’t know what to do.

When I asked Mary Anne what she truly wanted, she told me she wanted security that she won’t lose what she had attained. She wanted to enjoy her life. She wanted to feel alive.

If you, or someone you know, is feeling “trapped” by family responsibilities, work life, or something else out of personal control, then take heed. There is relief. You will need to make some changes. And, those changes begin within you. The first step involves expanding your presence beyond a linear plane lifestyle.

Are You Living On A Linear Plane?

Most people progress through life on a linear plane. Think of it like your life’s timeline. If you were to take a piece of paper and draw a straight line horizontally across the paper, the left end of this line is the beginning of your life and the right end of this line is your future. Somewhere along that line, is representative of your life today, right now. Your life timeline consists of three linear components:

- That portion of the line that represents your past;
- A bubble placed on the line to represent Now; and
- That portion of the line that represents your future.

Logically, you would visualize a life timeline progressing from left to right, with the bubble representing Now moving toward the right as time progresses. Although you are always at the bubble of Now, your past and your future continually support you. For instance, you use past experiences or memories to help you develop beliefs, make decisions, and respond to situations. You use your future to dream, set goals, and explore.

Learning from the past and working toward your future goals are a huge part of your life. Your future, whether 5 years, 10 years, or 20+ years, is where you hope to gain what you truly want. It’s exciting and rewarding to experience progress toward your goals. Here’s where many people fall into the linear trap. They start living their lives for the future:

- Someday, when I make it, I’ll be happy.
- Someday, when I retire, I can relax and enjoy life.

- Someday, when I get that promotion, I'll enjoy my job.
- Someday, when I can afford that new home, life will be good.
- Someday, after the kids are gone, I'll have time for my spouse.

Others may go in the other direction, living in their past:

- Heartbreak is too painful, I won't allow myself to be vulnerable again.
- My college days were the best, I wish I could return to those carefree days.
- Life's always been a struggle, why should I expect different?
- Being a recovering addict limits my potential.

In both the future and past living examples, attention is directed away from Now. All the while, as life progresses, Now continues to move along the life timeline. If you've fallen into the linear trap, past or future, your life's journey is no longer an enjoyable adventure.

To break free of the linear trap, you must start living in Now. As you begin making choices for living Now, you will find that Now is more than a tiny bubble on your life's timeline. Now is huge, and it's of utmost importance.

When you are consciously present in Now, you go beyond the linear plane and move into a richer life with immense vertical depth. This is where you discover the beautiful layers of your own personal being. This is where you release bad habits, sincerely accept your emotions, and honestly stake a claim for what's really important to you.

Go For Depth

One of the hardest things to do is to stay consciously present in Now. Here are three areas that you can start exploring to enhance your journey into Now:

1. Free yourself from self-judgment and judgment of others. Having negative thoughts about yourself and judging others are both rooted in your past. You are comparing and making judgments based on past experiences and memories. You may be surprised at how often your thoughts are focused on judgment. Simply noticing your judgmental thoughts begins the freeing process.
2. Connect with your inner truth. For many people, their mind monopolizes their every waking moment. Their minds are busy analyzing, strategizing, planning, whining, complaining, judging, daydreaming, etc., even as they lie in bed at night trying to fall asleep. Notice how your mind's thoughts are focused on the past or future. Regular meditation and prayer can help to quiet your mind and bring you to Now. As you learn to release your thoughts, you will discover your inner truth within the space that is created.
3. Accept what life brings you. You know the saying, "Life is not fair." When you feel threatened, don't allow yourself to go into automatic defensive, explanation, or blame modes. Instead, step back from the situation and accept the moment for what it is – just that, a moment in your life. Accepting the moment as it is allows you to slow down and connect with your inner truth. This doesn't mean you roll over and do nothing. In

contrast, as we learn to accept what has happened, our inner truth guides us on how to appropriately respond.

As you gain proficiency in these three areas, you'll find a natural reduction in unconscious habits that create stress and negativity in your life. Fears will lose their grip on you, and you'll gain more clarity and focus for your future. With time, you'll begin to experience a sense of peace, joy, and harmony as your thoughts and actions align more fully with your inner truth.

And, most importantly, instead of working hard to some day attain satisfaction and happiness, you'll find that a rich, fulfilling life can be had Now. When this happens, life becomes an adventure to enjoy.

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