

Pause on Purpose—A Vacation in the Next Moment

I just returned from an invigorating ski vacation last week, and already another week has flown by! How can this be?

While on the slopes, one day socked in with limited vision while another day relishing the fresh powder, I was, well, skiing. Thoughts of work, of bills to pay, of decisions to be made at the office or at home—all were fleeting thoughts if they were present at all. I was on vacation, enjoying friends, challenging my body to move (with the aches to prove it), taking in the mountain's beauty under a changing sky. I could pause and let life in.

Of course, I had given myself permission to be on vacation, to vacate or empty my mind of the typical concerns and be in relaxation mode. Yet upon return to 'daily life,' all the stops were gone! As a colleague once noted, "Vacation seems so far away when you come back to a busy schedule."

Perhaps you've had an experience like this yourself, where just when you think you're settling in to a nice rhythm or pace, maybe from a pleasant weekend or as a result of a satisfying conversation, then the next thing you know 'poof', it's gone! You're left to find yourself into the next week already!

Once catapulted into that next week you may've found yourself staring squarely at a long to-do list, eyeing all the things you believe you **must** do. Those pleasant moments got prematurely crowded out, now existing only as fast fading memories. You've already moved on.

Time is a product of our thought, a construct that we use to orient our lives, an agreed upon convention we all use to coordinate our lives. Yet we often feel at the mercy of the passing minutes; we're not clear on what will be most effective when it comes to Time.

Typically we either try to hold onto those moments of relaxation or reflection, those feelings of well-being, or we try to manage structure or control the minutes and seconds of 'our' time. Or, maybe we just don't pay attention at all, getting swept away in the time-pressured momentum of those around us

You see, we've bought into this notion that 'I don't have enough time,' and 'there's simply too much to do.' And having been fully seduced by this belief, we fall prey to its implications.

Do any of these choices sound familiar?

- I cram my day full of all that I must do, and I rush around to make sure it's all complete. And, I still don't get it all done.

- I put off dealing with life's details, only to later wonder and doubt myself and my decisions. And, I still need to address the details.
- I drop down, exhausted, and resign myself to what seems the inevitable—there just is not enough time for all I have to do. Period. And, it must mean something about me that I cannot manage, control, complete all that's scheduled for the day.

This is where we get stuck.

Instead of checking our assumptions about our relationship with time, we think we ought to *be* somewhere else, *doing* something else—at the meeting, attending the soccer game, making dinner, addressing our taxes, cleaning out the garage—rather than being here.

Try the following:

Pause on purpose. Right now as you read this, notice whether the bullet points above resonate with you.

Take a moment to review your relationship with 'time.' Withhold judgments; simply observe whatever you happen to notice.

Stand up, take a deep breath. Take one step back (yes, literally) and take another breath. Feel fully into your self, your body. Take yet another breath and a second step back.

From this vantage point, a few steps back and with a bit more breath to support you, what do you notice going on in your body? Your thinking? Your mood?

Answer these questions: Who sets the busy schedule? Who organizes around it? What determines who listens to the schedule? Who makes the choices, the decisions?

Now I'm all for using our moments wisely, to live them fully. This means, however, that we need to notice those moments we're already in, whether they're full of things to do, or open and spacious, stressed and frenetic.

What if it's not that we don't have enough time at all, or that we have so much we have to do? What if it's rather that we fill our lives so full, without permission to 'not do,' that we lose sight of this very moment?

What if the thing to work with is not time—time is elusive—rather it's to see our assumptions for what they are, how they shape our views of time, of what's important, of our choices, of ourselves even?

We learn to work with our assumptions, ourselves, by pausing. By committing to 'pause on purpose' we open up the richness of each moment, whether we like that moment or not, or have much to do or not. We can let life in. Isn't that what vacation's all about?