



PYT Weekly Training & Support

Lesson #77 Being Present

by Jim Katsoulis

I heard someone say once that they call the present “the present” because it's a gift. And I want to talk about that because it can be a very useful tool for you in order to influence your eating in a very powerful way but also in a very easy way because being present ... honestly, the hardest part about it is reminding yourself to do it.

But once you're thinking about it, it's really not very difficult. And so, we'll go through the process of becoming present and experience it; and then, we'll talk about some ways that you can experience that more throughout the day and make it a bigger part of your life because it can be very, very helpful in changing the way that you eat.

So, the first thing is let's become present. What does that even mean?

Well, what we want to do is we want to get our thinking. We want to get our attention and focus out of our thoughts. We spend so much time thinking about things in the future and things in the past that, a lot of times, we're not paying attention to what's happening right now. And so, being present is simply paying attention to what's going on right now.

And so, it's very, very simple. And we start by simply, visually—where are you? Look around the environment you're in. Notice what you see. And when we want to be present, we want to start physically. Where are we?

Then, we want to go into what do we hear? What sounds do you hear? Is it quiet? Do you hear a fan running? Do you hear the TV in the next room? Notice what you're hearing in this moment.

Then, we want to go into the feelings. Now, this is where you start to influence things a little bit but notice how you feel. You can take a deep breath if you want if that helps you notice easier and if that helps you observe in a more effective way.

Just ground you're; relax; and pay attention to where you are at the moment.

So, you're not necessarily trying to change yourself; you're really just being an observer of how you feel, where you're at right now, and being present with yourself.

Kind of go through your body a little bit. Are you tense? Are you relaxed? If you find you're tense, you can relax yourself, too.

And, psychologically, as we focus on “right now” visually, auditory, and kinesthetically, what happens is we are using up our psychology; we're using up our mental energy and we're tuning it to what's going on right now at this very moment in our existence.

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Now, you can bring in smell and taste if there are any. Of course, you can smell. Breathe through your nose and notice what you smell. Smell can be very [inaudible] **02:56** because, a lot of times, we don't pay attention to it. So, just by the fact that we're smelling something ... it's interesting because you're probably watching this in a place where you're regularly in and you may find out that you don't pay attention to the smell very often.

So, just the process of paying attention to the smell can sometimes make you more present in the moment, and that's the idea here.

Now, in a sense, the thing that pulls you out of being present are, a lot of times, your thoughts. So, when that happens, instead of fighting against those thoughts, you can re-ground yourself and re-orient yourself to the present by focusing back on your senses because your senses are in the here and now—the temperature of the room; the smell; the sounds—these are all things that are right in this moment. And our thoughts are the things that bring us backwards and forwards and fill up our heads.

Now, why is this important? For a number of reasons: One of the most important ones is this—that, oftentimes, food cravings while they are physiological (if we don't eat or if we ate something we enjoyed yesterday, we may think about it again today), they are not physically addictive. Of course, we need to eat; that's addictive but, specific foods, if you stop eating them, you're not going to have intense withdrawals from them.

So, food cravings are primarily psychological, and it's a good way to think about that because if you become in the present, in the moment, what happens is you can squash a craving in a moment sometimes because you're taking your mind off of that psychological idea of the food and you're re-grounding yourself and re-orienting yourself to right now, right in this moment.

And you may realize by doing this regularly that you're not even hungry because, psychologically, we can get ourselves to feel hungry even when we're not physiologically hungry. That's what we call “emotional eating.”

And so, when we pull ourselves back into the present, a lot of times, what we'll do is we'll also let go of a lot of negative emotions that we were experiencing because we were running different movies and ideas through our minds that weren't actually in the present moment. So, this can be an extremely powerful technique to eliminate cravings and to reduce them.

And as I've said, the hardest part, in the sense, of becoming present is to remind ourselves to do it; it's easy to get caught up especially in a world where we're so over-stimulated. A lot of times, we can go years or a lifetime without being present.

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So, the challenge here is to remind ourselves to do it. The challenge is not to do it because, again, all we have to do is pay attention to our senses right now; and that's what you fill up your attention with: What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell? What do I feel? What do I taste?

And as we do that, we re-ground ourselves to the moment; and when we do that, again, we let go of a lot of the things that we were making up in our minds and, consequently, feeling.

So, how can you do more of this in your life?

Well, the first step and I think this is the most powerful one is to make this a habit and a routine. If you can get into the habit of grounding yourself and spending a little bit of time in being "in the moment" intentionally and it could be a minute ... it doesn't have to be a long time because it's very powerful; but if you can set a time everyday that you dedicate to practicing building up this skill, then, what's going to happen is you're going to condition yourself to crave and desire it more and also to remind yourself to experience it more.

So, that's what you want to do. The more you experience it, the more you're going to want it. You're going to feed that craving to be in the moment simply because it feels nice. You know that, I hope.

Right now, again, become present. Get out of your thoughts and get into your body. Ground yourself right now as you're listening to this.

And the exercise is the technique, in a sense; and it's very powerful because you're going to start to realize that a lot of what's going on is up in your head because, usually, oftentimes, in the moment, you are safe; you are secure; you are fine. It's when we get into our thoughts a lot of times that we go into some of the turmoil. And, oftentimes, re-grounding ourselves can be the solution—not every time, but a lot of times.

So, make this a habit and you start that by ... what do you do habitually? When you get in the car, put a little note for yourself because you can do it when you're driving. You can be present when you're watching TV, when you're using the computer, when you're taking a shower, when you're brushing your teeth.

Things that you do habitually bring this feeling of being present because this is one thing that can definitely help you, absolutely, because it helps ground you to who you truly are. It connects you to reality as opposed to the fantasies and our imaginations in our mind that we're constantly playing. This re-orientes you to reality.

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And, oftentimes, in reality, there aren't any cravings. There is not really a hunger; and, oftentimes, when there is a hunger, you may find that it's a hunger for something nutritious, something that's really nourishing.

So, commit to this. Take it seriously. I promise you it's profound. Again, this is one of those things I've talked about where learning yoga was very important to me shifting my eating and my weight. And part of that was because now, every night, I would be present and I've never done that before.

I'd be present in the moment and I think that by practicing that consistently, it became a habit. I became more grounded throughout the day naturally. And when you are grounded (and this is probably in your own life), I'm going to bet you make better decisions that are going to get you the results that you're looking for.

So, commit to this as if it were that serious and that important to you. And I will talk to you next week.

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