

Let's turn to the title of today's podcast for a moment, "Being in the present moment, finding peace in uncertain times".

What does 'being in the present moment' even mean? We've all experienced the feeling of being in the present moment when we're completely immersed in something and lose our sense of time. That's great when we're doing something we love, but what about the rest of the time? There are plenty of TV commercials and marketing ads that tell us to "enjoy the moment". No doubt and maybe we can sustain a sense of peace and happiness for short periods of time, but when that?

Am I supposed to be happy all the time? If I'm not happy for most of the time is there something wrong with me? Why do I even need to be in the present moment?

Let's try an exercise. We'll begin by grounding ourselves. We're getting pretty good at this already. Feet flat. 3 breaths inhale thru nose, exhale thru mouth. Find those points of tension and relax them. Eyes, jaw, unclench your teeth, drop your shoulders. Breathe normally inhale and exhale thru your nose. Bring your attention to your hands, are they in your lap? Bring your attention to where your body is touching what you are sitting on, bring your attention to your feet as they touch the floor. And just breathe. Bring your attention to the flow of air through your nostrils. Can you feel as the air moves through your lungs and expands your belly. Can you feel it flow out through your nostrils. In a moment, I'd like you to take 5 breaths. Inhale, and on the exhale, count 1. Inhale again and on the exhale count 2. And do that three more times. Let's start and I'll hold the count for us. Our pacing may be different but no worries. And remember, keep your attention on your breath with the addition of the counting on the exhale. If you lose count just start over. Let's start.

How was that? Did your attention stay on your breath and your counting? Yes? Fantastic! Did your mind wander after the first breath, the second breath? Yes? Fantastic! This is a no judgment zone. Where did your mind go? Did you retreat into the past or jump into the future or did you stay right here with your breath? This exercise is not about trying not to think, it's about observing. Just the fact of witnessing where your mind goes is one of the first steps to mindful awareness and a meditation practice.

What stories do you tell yourself when your mind wanders? Are you saying I can't do this? What's the point? Am I thinking about what I'm making for dinner? Let's try this again and we'll count up to 7. If your mind wanders (and it probably will), see if you can observe where it goes. And if you start thinking about something, you can even say to yourself, "I'm thinking now", let the thought go and just start at 1 again. It doesn't matter how many times you need to begin again. Try not to judge yourself. Let's start.

Okay, so my mind wanders, so what? It matters because when we're thinking about the past, we tend to experience things like resentment, regret, shame, guilt and grief.

And when we think about the future we experience anxiety, fear, worry and self doubt.

What's happened in the past has already happened and we can't change that. And the future has not yet arrived. Dwelling in the past or future or both (and some do one more than the other) creates stress that we either can't do anything about any more or hasn't happened yet. There's a famous Mark Twain quote, "I've lived through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened."

And this is not to say that we can't learn from our past and we can't dream about our future. Living in the present moment is not some sort of panacea. But it is the constant repetitive

thoughts, especially when we berate ourselves, that are unproductive and keep us stuck and unable to get out of our own way.

The present moment, the right now, is where we can start anew. It is where we choose who we are going to be in this moment. It is where we can forgive ourselves, where we can hold ourselves in the light of "I'm okay". Recognizing and observing these repetitive, often negative thought patterns is the beginning of your journey. This simple process of breathing and connecting your mind and body uncovers these unconscious patterns and breaks the cycle of unnecessary suffering. Thank you so much for joining me. Remember to hold yourself in kindness, you deserve it.

So happy to be here with you. Thank you for showing up.

So often we show up for other people. For our job, our bosses, our partners, our kids, our parents, our friends and family. When do we show up for ourselves? What does that really even mean? I think the a question is more about how do we show up for ourselves?