

BACK TO THE PRESENT

By Nancy Jackson/Swami Dayananda

It's easy to drift, to allow the mind to make associations, tell stories, imagine dialogs or become engaged in an endless series of memories and fantasies. You might call it daydreaming. It is also known as being distracted, preoccupied or lost in thought. Sometimes a person in this state is called 'absent-minded', and when called back into focus, might even say, 'sorry, I wasn't here.'

When you consider it, how often during any given day do you become un-present? What is that experience? Perhaps an overall dullness of spirit, maybe emotional agitation or mental haze. With a blink you may gently transition into the present, or you may be jolted by a sound or touch. When asked about what you were thinking, what do you remember?

In contrast, what happens when you bring yourself back to the present? Right now, in the present moment, you are most alive, most vibrant, most connected and most filled with possibility.

If you can, focus on the present moment and explore its characteristics. The present has energy and power. The breath is in the present. You live in the present. You experience memories of the past and ideas of the future in the present. The present is filled with awareness and consciousness. It has intelligence and supreme alertness. The present also is the pathway to deeply connect with your inner or spiritual self.

Exploring the Present

The present moment is at the core of all physical, emotional and mental activities. One method of exploring the present is to scan and identify all input as though you're making an inventory.

The physical, obviously, is experienced through the senses. For example, right now, as you look around, what do you see? What do you hear, feel, taste and smell? How far is your scope physically? If you are in a room, it may be limited in distance but not in detail. If you are outdoors, you may be experiencing a broad panorama of

physical sensations and sensory input. Internally, the physical includes sensations such as movement, pain, breath or pulse.

The inner world can be divided into the two broad arenas of mental and emotional experience. Notice the mind's chatter. It might be making observations or judgments, generating ideas or reviewing impressions. Whether we're busy or relaxed, the mind creates endless streams of commentary. Just as the mind fluctuates, so do emotions. In this moment, you might feel peaceful or content, worried or slightly agitated. What feeling do you have?

Inquiry

Open your awareness to the physical space around you. Take the time to survey your experience. Use your gross and subtle senses. Notice the air and the temperature, whether you're hot or cold and if you are comfortable. Become aware of your breath. Ask yourself: What am I sensing? Become aware of your mind. Notice your inner voice. Does it shout or whisper? Now explore the dimension of feeling. Notice a mood or emotion. Try to name the feeling, no matter what it is. Notice being present. Is it a good feeling or bad feeling? What's it like?

Meditation

Focus on your inner world but keep your awareness open to what's going on outside. Be present to your breath going in and out. Be present to the thoughts that play in your mind without engaging in them. Be present to your mood or feelings at the moment. Acknowledge them and accept them. Fill yourself with the energy of being present.

Contemplation

To be alert and awake in this moment brings the full fruit of life.