

Staying in the moment

Who hasn't worried about what tomorrow will bring, or reminisced about the good old days a little too long? It is human nature to wonder what is going to happen next. Financial planners tout saving for tomorrow. They warn of the dire need to plan ahead. It is actually sage advice to "plan ahead." It is when we get stuck in the wondering what will happen next, that we get in trouble.

Not staying in the moment robs **us** of our "happy, joyous, and free" that Recovery promises us. That is why there are all those pesky repetitive slogans on the walls of the "rooms" where we learn to live and love; "Just for today," and, "One Day at a time" were drilled into me when I first came into the program twenty-one years ago. But that didn't stop me from "projecting" (as my drug and alcohol counselor in rehab like to call it) into that future. The "what ifs," I have heard it called since.

So, why do so many of us struggle with this concept of staying in the present? While, it does seem to be a human issue, addicts and alcoholics seem to have taken this "projecting" thing to a whole new level.

Maybe it is from all the time, we spent trying to get our next drink, or our next “fix.” We had to project then to survive life in active addiction. When we get cleaned up, and sobered up we do not know how to live any other way. Or we realize all the lost time that we squandered and think that maybe we can make up for lost time.

Regardless of why we do it, if we want to realize the “happy, joyous, and free” that are a direct result of working the steps, we need to learn how to stay in the moment. Buddhists call this inability to keep our minds focused on the moment the “monkey mind.” But they believe with vigilance, and prayer and meditation it can be trained.

I have been fortunate to be a part of some “Mindfulness” groups over this past year; these groups teach of the importance of breathing and bringing the “monkey mind” back to the center. The group suggests that every day, one should sit in a quiet place and just focus completely on the in and out breaths-nothing else. When the mind wanders-as it always does-just consciously bring it back and refocus it on the in and out breaths noticing any sensations caused by the breath.

You know what? It actually works. I guess there is a reason for that “keep it simple” slogan too. Keeping your mind focused on your in and out breaths for about 10 minutes a day-while completely simple- Is not exactly easy; but, it does get easier. It also makes one calmer and ready to tackle each day-moment by moment.

Give it a try. What have you got to lose?

“Live for the air after pain and there will be no reason to run.” anonymous