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The Power of Now

This week, Life Training Online is reviewing [The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment](#), by Eckhart Tolle, the tenth of fifty-two books in the [52 Personal Development Books in 52 Weeks](#) series.

I remember first hearing about this book while reading [The Millionaire Course](#) by James Allen. If you've ever read that book, you may have noticed that Allen seems to quote quite extensively from **The Power of Now**. After reading some of those quotes and becoming intrigued by the title, I decided to finally pick it up and take a look.

Eckhart Tolle's message is a simple one: live in the now and you'll find true happiness and enlightenment. While it's not a new concept by any means, I noticed, after briefly glancing over the book, that Tolle seems to have added a fresh voice to this seemingly simple idea.

The Power of Now promises to show the reader how to see beyond their own mind and emotions, thereby opening up the beauty and power of "the Now". Is this just another book in a growing genre on how to be more awake in our daily lives, or will it stand apart from the rest? Let's find out this week...

***The Power of Now** is the tenth of fifty-two books in Life Training - Online's series [52 Personal Development Books in 52 Weeks](#).*

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The Power of Now: Chapters 1 - 3

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You Are Not Your Mind

For those familiar with Zen teachings or the principles of “no mind”, this chapter will probably sound familiar. According to Tolle, **it is in the state of “no-mind” where true awareness — a state of pure consciousness — or the Power of Now, is found.**

There is a delusion that the majority of people believe — which is that you are your thought process. The first step in leveraging the Power of Now is understanding that **you are not your mind.**

Most people are addicted to thinking. They are a slave to the incessant ramblings of their own involuntary internal dialogue. The only difference between you and those “crazy” people you see muttering to themselves on the street is that you are not muttering out loud. The author states that when you can learn to separate yourself from your thinking mind, amazing things will begin to happen in every aspect of your life.

He’s not stating that we have no use for the mind, or thoughts. The mind is a powerful and necessary tool when used in the right context. But like with any tool, we need to be able to put it down — or in this case, shut it off — when we no longer need it.

Consciousness: The Way out of Pain

“The greater part of human pain is unnecessary.” The pain that Tolle refers to is psychological pain due to things like sorrow, worry, anxiety and grief. He says (and I tend to agree) that most of this pain is due to our minds focusing on the past or

future — ignoring the now. We refer to our past and find sorrow. We look to the future and experience worry and anxiety. The interesting thing is, none of this worry or sorrow is based on reality. It is all illusory. The only thing that is real is the here and now, which is the source of true joy.

Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry — all forms of fear — are caused by too much future, and not enough presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of nonforgiveness are caused by too much past, and not enough presence.

But instead, by being conscious of the present moment, we erase most of this pain from our lives.

It's important to note that Tolle stresses that the past and future can both be used to enhance the now. We learn from our past to better live our now. And we set goals for the future to keep us on the right path in the now. By using the past and future in these ways, we are in control of our mind and not vice versa.

Moving Deeply into the Now

“Whenever you are able to observe your mind, you are no longer trapped in it.” One of the best ways to enter into the Now is by becoming what Tolle refers to as “the silent watcher.” Become aware of your thoughts and thought process. Don't judge them, but look at them as a neutral 3rd-party observer would. If your mind goes off on a tangent, stay outside of that tangent in your consciousness and just observe. By regularly practicing this, you will identify less and less with your thinking mind and thoughts.

When you can learn enter the Now at will, the simple joy of Being will flow into everything you do. You will begin to feel a presence, a stillness, and a peace. By acting out of present-moment awareness, everything you do — even the simplest of actions — will become instilled with a sense of care, love, and quality. This is one of the great benefits of learning to live in the Now.

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The Power of Now: Chapters 4 - 6

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Mind Strategies for Avoiding the Now

One of the core points the author tries to get across throughout the book is that the mind is separate from ourselves. Also, it has its own agenda.

The mind is your ego's representative — the enemy to true Being or living in the Now. It will do everything in its power to keep you from experiencing the present moment fully. And if you can understand the common strategies the mind uses to keep you from being fully conscious, you'll be able to more quickly enter and maintain the state of being completely in the present. We've already discussed worry and guilt. Another major strategy the mind employs is waiting.

What Tolle refers to as waiting is our tendency to look to the future for our happiness. We are constantly waiting for that next job, or the next vacation, the next relationship, or waiting until we make lots of money — until we'll be happy. This state of mind is destructive to living fully in the present. What you are really saying is that you want the future and not the present. You don't want what you've got and you want what you don't have. Making a habit of this will greatly reduce the quality of your life.

When you catch yourself "waiting", snap yourself out of it. Just enjoy being. Come into the present moment and look for the beauty and life that is all around you. I like Tolle's example:

"So the next time somebody says, 'Sorry to have kept you waiting,' you can reply, 'That's alright, I wasn't waiting. I was just standing here enjoying myself — in joy in my self.'"

The State of Presence

According to Tolle, there's no way to intellectually understand what 'presence' is.

Truly understanding presence is *being present*. When you are intensely present you are free of thought, and one of the best ways to become intensely present is by becoming aware of your inner body (which I'll talk about in the next section).

For most of us, the only relief we find from the ramblings of our mind is by occasionally reverting to a level of consciousness below thought. Sleep is one way in which we all do it. Another way people find relief is through sex, alcohol, and other drugs. But these are all temporary 'fixes' without any lasting solution.

The answer is not found in falling back to a conscious level below mind (which is the level of animals and plants), but in moving forward into the consciousness of being totally here in the Now.

The Inner Body

One method of becoming aware of your inner body is by going within and "feeling" your body from the inside. As an exercise, Tolle suggests you close your eyes and try to "feel" the life energy that pervades throughout your hands, legs, organs, arms, chest and so on. If you can't feel very much at this stage, just pay attention to anything that you *can* feel. It might just be a slight tingling sensation in your hands and feet. These sensations will grow as you practice.

By directing your consciousness to your inner body, and maintaining that attention there while performing other activities (like reading this for example), you will be anchored in the Now. By doing this, you don't get lost in your mind. Your thoughts and emotions will still be there, but the difference is, they won't take over.

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The Power of Now: Chapters 7 - 10

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“As you go about your life, don’t give 100 percent of your attention to the external world and to your mind. Keep some within. Feel the inner body even when engaged in everyday activities, especially when you are relating with nature. Feel the stillness deep inside it. Keep the portal open.”

Portals Into the Unmanifested

Tolle refers to the Unmanifested as the life within all things, the inner essence of all that exists. When we learn to come into the Now we merge with the Unmanifest — drawing on its vital energy. Besides the Now being one of the gateways, Tolle describes other “portals” or gateways that one can use to enter into the Unmanifest. Here are some of them:

- ▶ **The cessation of thinking:** The involuntary continuous dialogue that makes up most of our thinking is the main hindrance to our experiencing the beauty of the Now. There are many ways of creating a gap in your thoughts. Meditation is probably one of the most well known.
- ▶ **Surrender:** This is the letting go of mental or emotional resistance to what is.
- ▶ **Silence:** By paying attention to the silence that is in-between sound, you’re mind will still. It’s through focusing on outer silence that your own inner silence will develop.

Enlightened Relationships

“Unless and until you access the consciousness frequency of presence, all relationships, and particularly intimate relationships, are deeply flawed and

ultimately dysfunctional.”

At the root of most of our intimate relationships, we want it all. We expect others will give us ultimate happiness, but this is not possible. **Pleasure may come from things external, but true joy must come from within.** And only realizing our own connection with the Unmanifest (by being in the present), can we directly find that level of fulfillment in a relationship that we are looking for. Because of that, relationships need to be worked on from the standpoint of the present, not through projecting others with impossible demands.

The Meaning of Surrender

When most of us think of surrender, words such as “giving up”, “defeat”, or “failure” may come to mind. Tolle, in his explanation of surrender, is referring to the simple wisdom of *yielding* to and not *opposing* the flow of life. And we experience this flow of life in the Now.

When we surrender, we accept the present moment unconditionally and without reservation. It’s important to realize that surrendering is not resignation. If you’re in a bad place in life, don’t feel you need to resign yourself to accepting that as your lot. By accepting or surrendering to *what is* you thereby ensure that there’s no energy-draining judgment, which frees that energy for constructively getting yourself out of that place in life.

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The Power of Now: Final Thoughts

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So what did I think of **The Power of Now**? For the most part, I enjoyed reading the book — I tend to be someone who gets caught up in his thoughts and this book has been a real help in reconfirming the importance of paying attention to the present moment.

Although Tolle wrote this book as a guide to spiritual enlightenment, it does have a lot of practical applications. Through living in the Now we can have better relationships, decrease our stress, learn faster and easier, and overall, live a happier life.

The only criticism I do have is Tolle's claim of authority on what the "enlightened ones" of ages past really meant in their teachings. For example, quite often throughout the book, he states that Buddha really meant this, or "the real meaning of [Jesus's Parable] was" that, or "even the men who wrote the Gospels did not understand the meaning of these parables". How does he know?

There's nothing wrong with having your own opinion, but just because you've had an "awakening experience", it doesn't qualify you as an authority to interpret spiritual subjects for all others. I personally feel that understanding and interpreting the scriptures and wisdom literature of ages past is a very personal journey.

Getting over that though, all in all the book is great. If you can't quite swallow all the "enlightenment" talk, I highly recommend at least reading the first four chapters.

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