

# “Now”: It’s only here once

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Your phone rings, your IM pings, you get an email or modern life interrupts you in some other way. It happens to all of us. In fact, it happens too often.

Instead of living in the “now,” we’re mentally all over the map. Today’s lifestyles can keep us from enjoying the present for very long.

## Where are you when you’re not present?

Are you thinking, planning or worrying about the future? Are you replaying or stuck on something from the past? In either case, you’re letting the present slip by without fully enjoying it. And it’s a unique moment that will never happen again.

## The price you pay

Not living in the present has consequences. Your daily life can feel fractured, jumbled and disorganized. You may lose some of your ability to focus and complete tasks.

In fact, have you ever lost your train of thought in the middle of your own sentence because your mind was wandering? It’s happened to most people — and it’s a perfect example of the distraction that keeps you from being “mindful.”

## What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness can sound complicated but it’s not. It’s just paying full attention to whatever you’re doing right now. It’s about living in the present. It can take effort and practice.

## The benefits of living in the “now”

Mindfulness has many benefits, including<sup>1</sup>:

- Experiencing more of your life by increasing your awareness
- Feeling less anxious
- Acting less impulsively
- Loosening up and having more fun
- Enjoying better relationships

## Mindfulness is worth the effort

Harvard psychologist, Ellen Langer, says “Everyone agrees it’s important to live in the present but the problem is how.”<sup>2</sup> Here are some suggestions for learning to live more mindfully<sup>1</sup>:

- 1. Know the basics of mindfulness.** Mindfulness is about focusing your attention purposely. It’s about increasing your awareness, senses and experience of a particular moment.
- 2. Keep it simple.** You don’t need to be mindful all day. In fact, short bursts of mindfulness seem to be the most beneficial.
- 3. Notice more.** You can be mindful while you’re brushing your teeth. Just tune in to the sights, sounds, tastes and feelings of that daily act. Be mindful when you go for a walk or eat your meals. You may find that each of these routines is really more interesting than you ever thought.
- 4. Breathe.** Focus on your breathing. That’s one easy way to get yourself to be mindful at any time. When you pull back into yourself and focus on your breath, you’re creating quiet time. That can help you block out everything else.
- 5. Be unselfconscious.** Do you spend a lot of time thinking about how you’re doing? That’s called selfconsciousness. The opposite is “unselfconsciousness”<sup>1</sup> and it’s one of the keys to living in the now. Rather than watching and judging yourself, just be yourself.

## What you’ll notice as you become more mindful

Mindfulness is calming. It helps you focus and decreases stress. Think of it as training for your brain so you can live a happier life.

<sup>1</sup>[www.psychology.today.com](http://www.psychology.today.com). Accessed November 2015

<sup>2</sup>[www.harvardmagazine.com](http://www.harvardmagazine.com). Accessed November 2015