

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Time...Living in the Moment, Seeing in the Future

“A phrase in which two or more words of contradictory meaning are used together for special effect.” Now, that an oxymoron! How can we really see in the future while living in the moment? We hear a lot about “being present” and how important it is. Yet, most of us have our brains wired to always be thinking about that meeting in an hour, or picking up the kids for soccer at exactly 4:00 pm; hoping there is enough time to mail off a package at the post office and grab something to eat to get through our kid’s two hour soccer practice. And, of course, trying not to get too anxious about that financial report deadline due tomorrow at work.

It is my belief that we can actually see into the future of our lives by living in the moment. This doesn’t mean you just ignore planning ahead or that you just bounce from one spontaneous thought or activity to the next. With every moment, a choice is made that set the course for the next moment...and the next. Remember, your future is all wrapped up in every moment that passes by. So, you are actually living your future right now in that moment! When looking back through the years, your future was all wrapped up in that unique journey of moments in time.

If you struggle with living in the moment as you live out your future, here are some things to consider.

- Answer this question and write down your response, making it handy on a daily basis. “What is most important to you?” You may just find your answer helps you return to living in the moment almost instantaneously. You will undoubtedly practice this with some simple challenges that come your way. Yet, the test will be when some tough days happen where you are caught between two tigers in your life wanting to have you for lunch!
- Then, as those two tigers get closer to gnaw on your heels, what do you see around you that brings a soothing smile to your soul? Does it instantly transport you to that special space of “living in the moment” that no tiger can go? If so, you are well on your way to living a life that embraces every moment as you see into your future today.

What is happening with the process just described? You are actually letting go and reaching out at the same time. In that very moment of these two actions, you have freed yourself from the weight and attachment of concern and embraced a sure-fire way to enjoy the present.

Balance comes into your life where you can now take a reach out “time out” and begin to see the bigger picture of that concern in the context of what is most important to you. Remember, though, tigers come in all packages—some may be monsters, but many are just personal habits of obsessing on the job, the stock market, finances, possessions. You name it.

Here are a couple hints that may tell you are not living in the moment, at that moment.

1. Do you pretend to be listening? Be honest with yourself. You just might be missing a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a conversation with your friend or a special moment with your child.
2. Is your calendar so full you have no “ME” time in quiet silence or solitude, or time to explore something new? If so, living in the moment is undoubtedly a rare event for you. What are my attachments? What are some things I cannot let go? What attachments am I willing to release, in order to live life to the fullest?

All of us have a comfort zone that is very comfortable, but it often restricts us from exploring new things in life. And when you explore new things, you really begin to savor “living in the moment.” You will quickly find that life is fresh and exciting and full of possibilities. Those tigers really become less daunting, and may even shrink to little kittens. Living in the present may just become both easy and exhilarating.

Living mindfully in the moment, you will find it easier and easier to stop dwelling in the past or excessively worrying about the future, where the past and concerns of the future almost paralyzed you. You will actually feel like you have been given a wonderful gift, complete with peace, contentment, energy, and excitement.

All you need to do is just accept it and enjoy it. Can you receive it? Do you even know it’s being offered? If not, today is a good day to open your gift as a basic right of being human.

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Sharon L. Benedict, MS, ACC, is a certified life wellness coach-consultant, specializing in life skills, wellness, and creative arts development for individuals, businesses and organizations (www.harvestenterprises-sra.com). She welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com.

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Time Tested...where every day is Good Luck Day

Since this article comes out on Friday the 13th, I decided to turn the tables and declare that this day is now officially “Good Luck Day!” Let’s all start celebrating every Friday, the 13th this way. Who needs more bad luck or negative talk right now, right? We only have so much time in our day and years. Why spend your Fridays in the dumps thinking bad luck is coming your way?!

Every moment and every day we are given is a good luck day when you are determined to make it so, even if only by attitude. I’m sure you have heard about self-fulfilling prophecies. Well, just as much as we are what we eat, we are also what we say about ourselves and others.

Wikipedia has a great definition for “**self-fulfilling prophecy**” as “a prediction that directly or indirectly causes itself to become true, by the very terms of the prophecy itself.” 20th-century sociologist Robert K. Merton has been credited with coining the expression "self-fulfilling prophecy" and its formal structure and consequences. In his book *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Merton offers one feature of a self-fulfilling prophecy: “The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a *false* definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the original false conception come 'true'. This specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. For the prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the

very beginning.” What this does is create a situation where what is false is believed as truth and thereby influence people, either through fear or logical confusion, to behave in such a way that their reactions and actions ultimately fulfill the once-false prophecy.

Self-fulfilling prophecies go back to ancient times but also shows up in our movies all the time. One example applies to most of the "Force Visions" in the Star Wars universe. The plot of the 2005 film *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* was based around a self-fulfilling prophecy. The main character, Anakin Skywalker, has a premonition in a dream about the death of his wife Padmé Amidala. He searches for a way to save her; and in desperation, allies himself with the evil Sith. However, it is Anakin's turn to evil that ends up killing Padmé.

So, if there is a cause and effect for this tenet, then the opposite can also be true when speaking positive things into your lives and others. You can actually make good things happen. In coaching circles, it's called the "Law of Attraction." You attract things, people, and events to yourself based on what you think and say about yourself and others. We often neglect to make the connection between what comes out of our mouths, how we use our time, and what eventually happens in our lives. We tend to just think bad things and good things just happen. Believe me, this is not always the case. For most of us, we also just can't believe that positive things can happen 100% of the time. So, for the moment, let's not expect perfection here.

So, what negative self-fulfilling prophecies have you been entertaining lately? If you spend your Fridays in the dumps thinking bad luck is coming your way, you just might act in a way that makes them come true. Let's start turning this around today.

Let's say you are having a very bad day, week, year! Where in this dismal scenario can you speak a positive message in the midst? Is this hard for you to do?

Maybe you have that melancholy personality who tends to linger in the negative. Hopefully, you have a more charismatic friend or spouse who helps lift you out of it. If so, ask them to share their more positive perspective. Don't just cut it off as not being realistic. Give it a try. Write it down and carry it around, and speak it out loud for enough days until you actually see some positive changes happen around you.

I am confident you will see something special start to happen, if only in your attitude—bringing you a sense of calm and hope. You may feel you are only in the eye of a hurricane. Yet, I also believe the storm's force will subside leaving a clear sky and beautiful night stars for you to enjoy. I can't promise that this will all happen tomorrow or the next day. Be patient with yourself and keep speaking time-tested positive good luck days into your future in the moment you have right now. Do it for others. Look around. Spring's time and season are coming!

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Time & Choices

Time is understood as a “component of a measuring system used to sequence events, to compare the durations of events and the intervals between them, and to quantify the motions of objects.” This is Wikipedia’s fancy way of saying “time and events move onward whether you like it or not” (my rendition of course!).

Just about every scientist, philosopher, religious scholar have research, debated, and pondered the mystery of time in space and the human experience. This quest is definitely not without controversy. Although in physics, scientists tend to believe it is one reality and is fundamental to all of science. Yet, even astronomers postulate that in space, time can speed up and slow down—particular for those sci-fi fans that find a fast-moving worm hole or Stargate! For most of us though, we watch ourselves in the mirror and definitely know time is flying by and not necessarily slowing down at all!

The more imaginative scientists and philosophers passionately dialogue about the possibilities of space-time continuums that offer creative ways to chart other realities out there that shift and alter time (whether linear or circular). For now, let’s stay here on earth and consider something more real for our everyday lives with whatever time we have.

What is it?—simply Choices. With every choice, time was used to contemplate a decision. Then time is used to take that first step. And with every step time moves on.

As Wikipedia also declares, "Time is also of significant social importance, having economic value ("time is money") as well as personal value, due to an awareness of the limited time in each day and in human life spans." Now, this is where you just might have some power to, if not slow time down, at least extend your time and life. Choices make all the differences for doing just that. I offer a few hints to consider. Take all the time you want to embrace these possibilities:

- ***The altitude of your gratitude depends on your attitude.*** So, shift from the negative to the positive...see blessings that surround you, and opportunities wrapped up in so-called problems. Then take your first step in the direction time is calling you.
- ***Wellness is a choice.***...begin today to commit to simple daily choices in what you eat, drink, exercise/movement, and creative ways to free yourself from stress. Start with small steps that build confidence in the outcomes you see each day. Then move on to the bigger ones. Get support and willing accountability in whatever way you can to keep moving forward.
- ***Forgiveness gifts you with more time to love and enjoy others.***
Forgiveness encourages you to use your time to seek peace, contentment, and compassion for others. Time redeemed and well spent in surprising ways will greet you. Unforgiveness robs you of time, freedom from stress and health, and a willing heart to understand the other person's perspective. Let the weight go and see the gift that awaits you.
And, of course, seek forgiveness also. Even if the person you are forgiving

or seeking forgiveness doesn't receive it, you are still freed). So, step out today and forgive in whatever way your heart calls you to embrace.

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Times are a Changin'

I bet for many of us, we are just about ready to clobber anyone who says “it’s time for a change.” This politically operative word, change, has been thrown around and pounded at us all to the point that most of us wonder what the term really means for our future. In addition, has anyone out there read the 1,000+ pages of the stimulus package that is supposed to usher in the so-called needed “change?” I’m still searching for the cliffs notes on it! I also continue to get tripped up by all the strings hanging from it!

So, while other more savvy people wade through the volumes, I find myself wanting to experience some calm in the midst of all that is happening around me each day. I want to grab time and slow it down so I can still smell the roses while I can. Yes, *times are a changin'*. Yet, is “change” the only operative word here? Maybe it should be “change to...where?” As you watch our nation’s future unfold before your eyes, give time to not just becoming informed about the changes coming your way. Also, take time to soak in the beauty and fragrance of your garden right at home. Take a walk on a nature trail in between those monumental decisions facing you.

You will then have more stamina to dig into the lengthy pages of the stimulus package that everyone is seeking to get a piece of the pie...hopefully for the good of our community and nation. Check out the following government links to read the entire

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. And by all means take time to stay informed on its trail back to your very own community. Again, *Times are a changin'!*

<http://www.recovery.gov/>

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/ARRA_public_review/

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h1enr.pdf

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