



Appreciating the “Now”

by Jeanne M. West

This is certainly a time in life when we are given the opportunity to do just that – appreciate the “Now.” In our normally fast paced world, it is easy and natural to be focused on our plans and expectations, our aspirations and our dreams. This does not mean that we ditch those important aspects of our lives, but rather that we either put them “on hold” for now and/or find substitutes for them right now. Here are some wonderful ways to appreciate the present moments of our lives.

1. **Enjoy nature.** That comes to mind first, because it is always with us, yet we so often take it for granted. It is a time to not just listen, but actually *hear* the birds singing, feel the gentle breeze against our skin, watch a beautiful sunrise or sunset or enjoy the beauty of our garden.
2. **Acknowledge and appreciate family and friends.** Pick up the phone and call that friend that you have been unable to visit. There is always the opportunity to text or e-mail, but the phone call is so much more personal. Connect on a deeper level with family, near or far, letting them know their importance in your life. We all believe we are “important” but isn’t it nice to have someone tell us that ... or say “Gosh, I miss seeing or being with you.” These are connections of the heart and are the best medicine to keep us emotionally well.
3. **Connect with your faith community.** Do we ever realize how important they are to us until we cannot see and be with them during our regular faith experience (meaning, going to church or temple)? While *You Tube* now makes it possible to participate in a liturgy of one’s faith, we are missing that “connectedness” that happens when we gather in unison, side-by-side, to hear and proclaim our beliefs with a community of believers. Why not call or e-mail someone from your faith community? This is such a simple gesture that can touch the heart and soul of the person whom you are contacting. You will make that person feel GREAT and you will too!
4. **Perform acts of kindness.** In our normally busy lives, it is so easy to say, “oh, I don’t have time for that now.” However, one thing we do seem to have more of right now, is “time.” Many are working from home and might just have “extra time” on our hands. And even if there is not exactly extra time, think of how good it feels to do something special for someone – perhaps an elder or infirm neighbor or friend – for whom you can

pick up groceries or perform some other errand. “In giving, we receive” – how true. That simple gesture of kindness can mean the world to someone. Look around ... think of who you might reach out to ...then DO IT! You will feel so good!

5. ***Slow down and really appreciate the NOW.*** We really do live in a fast-paced world! We’re in a hurry, the highways are normally busy and crowded, we rush from one place to another with so much to do and get done. Now, we are at home more, driving less and opportunities abound for us to pay attention to what is happening in the *now*. Paying attention to the *now* is a critically important factor that will enable each of us to be more appreciative of what we have, rather than complaining about what we are missing.

Taking a walk outside and around the neighborhood can be another way to appreciate the *now*. Look at the flowers and then – take a moment and literally, stop and smell them. This experience will awaken a number of senses ... sight, touch, smell ... and this is sure to bring a smile to your face and put a warmth in your heart. Oh ... and be sure to take photos to capture these memories!

Although we are, no doubt, ready to “get back to normal,” – whatever that might look like, let’s not pass up this unique, though somewhat foreign opportunity, to practice some of these five strategies. Let us be grateful for the past, think about and appreciate the uniqueness of what is open to us *now* and move with deliberation, caution and positive action as we tread carefully into the future.

Last, let us put on an attitude of gratitude to be living in Santa Barbara, California. We are a caring community, filled with beauty, incredible resources and people who are experiencing and sharing the *now*, each in our own unique and powerful way.

“Sometimes life pushes us, and there is usually wisdom in it that we only see later. - Diane Gilman

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