



Module #6 of 10—*Short Version*

UK Extension's
Universe of
Possibilities™

SKILLS FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND BLESSING OTHERS

Embracing This Present Moment

Embracing what is and living with complete attention in the present moment opens up all kinds of possibilities. It's no wonder that great achievers, philosophers, and spiritual teachers from all traditions have sung the praises of living in the joy of the timeless now.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, for example, put it this way: "With the past, I have nothing to do; nor with the future. I live now." Emily Dickinson noted, "Forever is composed of nows." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged his followers to give up needless worry about the future and, with faith, to live in all their natural glory as do "the birds in the air and the lilies of the field." He said to "take no thought for tomorrow" and to "put your hands to the plow without looking back," giving full attention, one day at a time, to the challenges and opportunities that arise. Similarly, Buddha asserted, "The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, not to anticipate troubles, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly."

Of course, the art of living in present time does not preclude skillfully visiting the past and future. Remembering lessons from the past is vital; fond memories warm our hearts; and having an eye to the future is part of living wisely and giving birth to our dreams.

Target of Life. Look at the Target of Life symbol that appears at the upper left side of this page. Put yourself on the Target in the center of the heart. Notice that the heart of the Target is clear, unobstructed, full of light. From there, you see clearly and make choices that are good for you and those around you. You feel peaceful, energetic, creative. Your reflexes are sharp, your immune system strong. You stumble and fall less often, and you handle life's inevitable challenges with more confidence and skill. You are naturally more sensitive to others—more patient, generous, and understanding. The more deeply centered you are in the heart of the Target of Life, the more love you feel and share. You are at your best—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

However, when difficulties arise and things don't go your way, you're likely to be pulled off center into the darker areas of the Target. You say and do things you regret. Your immune system weakens and your productivity declines. You lose touch with what's really important to you. Unhealthy stress increases and your sensitivity toward others decreases. And the further away from the center you move, the worse it gets! You experience more heaviness and darkness, more fear and negativity. That's why it's so important to catch early signs of stress and to use all of your creativity to stay as centered as possible.



7 Core Principles



- 1 There are two aspects to embracing the present moment: 1) being fully aware and attentive to the here and now; and 2) completely accepting the moment-to-moment reality of what is.
- 2 When you are fully alive to the wonder and opportunity of each moment, anxiety dissipates, fresh possibilities arise, and a peaceful, fundamental happiness emerges.
- 3 As a general rule, the degree of fear we experience is an exact measurement of how far we have strayed from the present moment into regrets about the past or worries about the future.
- 4 When you do not accept what is in the moment, you are fighting reality—much like banging your head against a brick wall.
- 5 Learning to accept what is, instant by instant, will save you untold frustration, anger, and disappointment.
- 6 Accepting the moment-to-moment flow of what is gives you the freedom to focus all your energy on creatively making any positive changes that are needed, whether they are concrete changes in the world around you or personal attitudinal adjustments.
- 7 Remember, the more centered you are on the Target of Life, the greater your well-being, the wiser your choices, and the more effective you are in everything you do.

Life takes place only in the present moment. Unfortunately, most of us have a strong tendency to stray into the past or wander into the future. Often our attention is only partially on the person we are communicating with or on the task at hand. In failing to be fully present, we miss much of life's richness and limit our effectiveness, our happiness, and our ability to give to others.

*Stop living in a past that is gone
and a tomorrow that is yet to come.*

*Life is only this place, this time,
this breath—right now.*

Lisa Engelhardt

CALL YOUR SPIRIT BACK TO PRESENT TIME

Teacher and author Caroline Myss stresses the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of living in present time. Dr. Myss explains that many of us have trouble doing this, however, because so much of our energy is locked up in the past or future.

To function at your best, you need as much of your energy as possible in present time. Get in the habit of noticing where your attention is. ***If your spirit needlessly wanders into the future or gets stuck in a past event, call it back to present time!*** If you're like most of us, you may need to do this again and again each day. As often as necessary, remind yourself to wholeheartedly embrace the wonder and opportunity that each moment presents.

It's All Perfect

Let's assume there's a good reason for all that happens to you, that each event is designed to feed your growth and happiness, that everything is orchestrated for your highest good, that it's all perfect, and that it's the same for everyone else.

*You might attribute this to the wondrous order of the universe or to the divine plan of a loving God. Either way, **what if you decide to live your life from this point forward with the complete conviction that everything that happens to you—without exception—is absolutely perfect just as it is?** Here are some of the benefits you might experience from seeing the world this way:*

- ♥ You would no longer waste precious time and energy fighting the reality of what is.
- ♥ You would have far more energy available to make positive changes both within yourself and in the world at large. ♥ Undeterred by needless frustration, anger, and fear, you would see people and circumstances with more clarity and understanding. ♥ Accepting what is, you would live more fully and richly in the present moment. ♥ Freed from the weight of needless stress, your body and immune system would function with greater efficiency and strength. ♥ Your energies would be less scattered, leaving you peaceful and alert. ♥ You could engage people and events with deeper compassion, sensitivity, good humor, and creativity.
- ♥ You would find it much easier to concentrate pleasantly and wholeheartedly on the task at hand.
 - ♥ If you are spiritually inclined, you could more easily attune to the Divine Presence.
- ♥ Knowing that everything is perfect just as it is, you would be far less apt to dwell on worries about the past or fears about the future. ♥ You also would be less prone to fear, anger, or depression over events in your life. ♥ You could better see that, as terrible as they are, conditions such as hatred, war, poverty, and young children dying of starvation or cancer may indeed be invitations for us to learn and share and take responsibility for creating a kinder, more loving world. ♥ With your increased energy and understanding, you would become a much wiser and stronger force for good in this world. ♥ Your composure, wisdom, and vitality would be a beautiful living example for your loved ones and for all who cross your path. ♥ You would more easily embrace the wonder and opportunity of each present moment. ♥ No matter what happens—whether pleasant or painful—you would greet each event with greater composure and understanding, saying from the depths of your heart, "Thank you. I will make the best of this opportunity."



*You might not totally accept the belief that "It's All Perfect," but perhaps some aspects of this way of thinking will help you **live with greater peace, creativity, and joy in the present moment.***

LOVING WHAT IS

One of the basic causes of unhappiness is our refusal to accept the moment-to-moment reality of what is—what's happening right now. *At the root of our frustration is this: The way things are is different from what we want or expect, and we don't accept that fact.* It's sort of like getting mad every evening because the sun goes down. Not many of us would intentionally bang our heads against a brick wall. Yet, when we refuse to accept what is, we do just that—bang our heads against the brick wall of reality.

Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it. Make it your friend and ally, not your enemy. This will miraculously transform your whole life.

Eckhart Tolle

Accepting what is does not mean that things must stay the same. In fact, as you learn to accept the here and now, you keep within yourself all the energy that you once wasted in disappointment and frustration. This means you're in a *much* better position to change what you can.

By taking good care of the present moment, we take good care of the future.

Thich Nhat Hanh

MORE POISE, MORE FREEDOM

Accepting what is means you've decided to stop arguing with reality, and because of that, you are calmer, more alert, more powerful. You have greater energy and presence to spend enjoying life or taking a stand for what you believe in. The more you accept what is, the more centered you will be in the heart of the Target of Life—and that's the best place of all for you to be.



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10 Educational Modules

UK Extension's Universe of Possibilities™: Skills for Creating Happiness and Blessing Others is an educational series containing 10 modules. Each module is accompanied by a Macromedia Flash® movie, a PowerPoint® presentation, and other teaching tools. All these resources, along with a Facilitator's Guide, are available free-of-charge in camera-ready format at the following website: www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities.

1. **Your Vision Map**
2. **Making the Growth Choice**
3. **The Way of Peace**
4. **Heart Intelligence**
5. **The Freedom of Self-Discipline**



6. **Embracing This Present Moment**
7. **Accepting and Loving Your Body**
8. **Healthy Relationships**
9. **Unleashing Your Creativity**
10. **Gifts of Gratitude and Blessing**

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