

How to Improve Any Moment

The title of this article is a bit misleading, because every moment is already perfect and doesn't need to be improved. But our *experience* of the moment can be fraught with difficulty, and we have the power to create a new experience in each moment.

The problems we face stem from *our narrative about the moment*: we are constantly interpreting things in a certain way, so that we don't even notice that we have this interpretation or narrative.

For example:

- If someone hasn't returned my text message, I might interpret it as meaning that they're upset with me in some way, and feel hurt.
- When someone asks a question, I can interpret that as a criticism of me, and get bothered by it.
- When I haven't done all the things on my task list, I can interpret that as another sign that I'm doing things wrong, and feel discouraged and guilty about that.

In any moment, we have a narrative about that moment. A story, an interpretation, an evaluation. And that story will determine our experience.

Here's the powerful thing we can practice:

1. We can drop the story and just experience the moment, exactly as it is; and
2. We can create a more powerful story.

Let's take each of those in turn.

Experiencing the Moment As Is

Right now, take a look around — you are surrounded by air, light, sound, objects, life. This is the moment, just as it is.

Now, you'll immediately begin to interpret all of that, and create a narrative about it: it's messy, that person is irritating, you haven't done certain things, etc.

But what would it be like to just drop that story and see the moment just as it is, without interpretation?

See it with beginner's mind. With the eyes of a child seeing a cloud or tasting an orange for the first time. As if it were a completely new experience.

You can practice this by going for a walk — on the walk, see if you can experience it afresh, without a narrative or evaluations. Just see the moment. Just experience the world directly, without a layer of interpretation. Bring curiosity to all of it.

The effect of this is to drop the story that creates struggle and suffering. It gives a directness to your experience.

Create a New, Powerful Story

It's hard to go through life with no story — but there are ones we can bring into the our experience that are helpful, even powerful.

Once we've dropped our old story, and just experienced life directly, here are some interpretations that I've found to be powerful:

- **Wonder & awe:** We can see everything around us as a miracle. As wondrous and awe-inspiring. This is an appreciation for the incredible nature of life. It's a practice of loving what is.
- **Gratitude:** Similar to finding awe in everything, can we be grateful for what's here in this moment? For ourselves and others? This is not just appreciating what is there, but feeling grateful that you have it.
- **Compassion:** When you notice suffering in others or yourself, you can generate a wish for that suffering to come to an end, for the person to find peace and even happiness. Send this compassion outward to others. This generates a loving feeling in the heart that adds something wonderful to the experience of this moment.
- **We are all interconnected:** This is an appreciation that we are not isolated, but instead we are all supporting each other. Everything we have is supported by many others. Everything we do affects others, and can be a positive influence on others. An appreciation of this interconnection is a way to not take it for granted, and to do what we can to positively influence other people.

You might have other stories that help you — stories of empowerment, of love, of generosity. After dropping old stories and experiencing the moment directly, try these stories on and see how they affect your experience.

With this kind of practice, you can create a beautiful experience of any moment.