

The Practice of One Thing at a Time

There's a Japanese term, "ichigyo-zammai," that basically means full concentration on a single act.

Sunryu Suzuki described this practice in his book, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, and said this practice of being fully in the moment with the activity is enlightened activity.

"So instead of having some object of worship, we just concentrate on the activity which we do in each moment," Suzuki Roshi wrote. "When you bow, you should just bow; when you sit, you should just sit; when you eat, you should just eat."

He said when we just do that one activity, we express our true nature.

What a beautiful idea, that when we aren't present, our true nature cannot fully express itself ... but when we are truly just doing whatever we're doing, we start to express our true selves.

But it's easier said than done. How often are we not in the moment?

Think about times when we are:

- Jumping between tasks in a browser
- Checking our phones while doing other things throughout the day
- In a rush to do the next thing while still doing the current thing
- Thinking about other things when someone is talking to us
- Irritated by someone when they interrupt whatever we're doing
- Taking whatever we're doing for granted, because it's dull or routine

It turns out, we are very rarely fully in the moment with any single activity. How can we try this enlightened activity of full concentration on one act?

How to Do One Thing at a Time

These are as much reminders to myself as they are reminders for you, but here's what I've been practicing with:

1. When you start an activity, turn to it with your full attention and set an intention to be present with the act, to do nothing but this activity. You might think, "Just walk" or "Just read" or "Just drink tea."
2. You might open up a wide-open, sky-like panoramic awareness as you do the activity, being fully engaged with the entire moment.

3. When you notice yourself thinking about something else, or getting your attention pulled elsewhere, or starting down a pattern of judgment, resentment, etc. ... just notice. Then return to being fully present with the activity.
4. Empty your mind of preconceived ideas about the activity, and just be curious about what the activity is actually like, right now, as it unfolds. Allow yourself to be surprised.
5. Treat every object with reverence, as if it were your own eyesight.
6. See the brilliance of each moment, of each activity, that underlies everything around us.

Just write. Just shower. Just give someone your full attention.

As we give each activity our full loving attention, we start to appreciate each person, each object, everything around us as something worthy of respect, love, and gratitude.

We start to take life up on the opportunity to fully engage with it, with a smile and a bow.