



## ***All that Matters: Some of the Most Precious Gifts We Overlook***

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### **Abstract**

*As the demands increase all around us, we also feel the need to return to a life in which we can value the simple things again. In fact, these two facts can co-exist perfectly well. This article reminds us how we can perform in our daily lives, yet dwell on the simple gifts we all received in our lives, which we tend to take for granted, thus overlook.*

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### **The paradox of our times**

We are living in intriguing times. Never before has humanity had this degree of sophistication in communicating with such advanced devices on such an expansive scale. At the same time, we have grown closer than ever before to the understanding that we have to rethink many of the paths we threaded so far. Whether we accept the theories about global warming or not, we cannot deny that there is little reason for pride when we think of the many manifestations of corporate deception led by the seemingly insatiable greed of small groups of people. The question remains how we can balance these two factors, which basically boil down to an interesting paradox: we face more distraction, while we realize the need for greater focus.

The most critical thing about regaining focus is that it works differently for each of us. There is no specific lecture or seminar we can take to start refocusing on what really matters. Yet, one thing may work for many of us: dwelling just a little bit longer on all those small gifts we have by the very virtue of being alive. These



are gifts we easily overlook, because they are there, and no one questions or discusses them on a daily basis.

Here are three of the gifts we regularly overlook.

### ***The gift of you***

A lady once had a precious necklace around her neck. But, forgetful as we can all be sometimes, she forgot that she had it on and thought her necklace was lost. She looked for it everywhere but could not find it. She called friends and family members to ask if they knew the whereabouts of her precious necklace, but none of them had any idea where it could be. At last one of her friends suggested for her to feel around her neck to find out if, perhaps, she was wearing it? She felt around her neck and, indeed, found that the necklace had been there all along. In the days after her frantic search, the lady's friends and family members called her to ask if she found her necklace. She admitted to finding it, because to her it was as if she had lost it, even though it had been with her all the time.

Just as it is with the precious jewelry of the lady above, so is it too with our self. We often forget our most important gift, our self - which is always with us - , and seek everything we need outside. We ask friends and family members, mentors, colleagues, supervisors, gurus, and others to advise us about issues to which we could actually find the best answers by turning to the jewel inside.

Many people are skeptical about this notion of an inner guru. That is because they have been programmed so well and so long to rely on everything and everybody else for counsel, that they no longer believe they harbor the capacity to develop insights. Some of them visit the inner fountain at times, and then forget about it again, as they get caught in the demanding quests of life. Others may initially turn inward and find



answers, but then get influenced by an externally focused environment, upon which they promptly lose touch with their core.

Nevertheless: all the awareness you need in life resides inside of you. A good way to reconnect with this inner wealth is through meditation. Meditation is not a religious process, but more a psychological one. And just as well as we have been psychologically conditioned to think that insight and awareness are external treasures to be chased continuously, we can psychologically recondition ourselves to understand that they reside inside.

Sir Ken Robinson, one of the most brilliant critics of our education system, gives a funny but telling example of a little girl who is drawing something. When her teacher asks her what she's drawing she says, "I'm drawing God." The teacher says, "But no one knows what God looks like!" Little girl: "They will in a minute."

There was a time you were like that little girl, with a similar connection to your inner awareness and imagination. You can restore that connection and rediscover the path to your inner fountain and its abundance. Try it. It may be an enjoyable journey!

### ***The gift of breathing***

*"Who will tell whether one happy moment of love or the joy of breathing or walking on a bright morning and smelling the fresh air, is not worth all the suffering and effort which life implies".*

~ Erich Fromm

You may have heard people say that we only value something when we have lost it. That is very true. But there is one thing that's so critical, that we no longer exist once we lost it: our breath.



Day after day, we are so busy undertaking all kinds of "important" actions, that we take the things that really matter for granted. Breathing is one of those things. How often do we simply take a moment to focus on our breathing? And yet, it is the one thing that distinguishes us from death. But because we have been blessed with this gift from birth, we don't think about it too often. We rarely value it, until there is a moment when we get in trouble and cannot breathe. That moment can be a minuscule one. Just a few seconds. When the air is cut off, we suddenly realize that all those appointments, living standards, desires, special someone's, positions and possessions don't really matter. When our breath gets cut off, we are ready to sacrifice all those "important" things to get it back.

There is a touching story of a man who suffered from asthma. He just met a pretty young lady, and they were getting along very well. Yet, about a week after they met, while making plans to go to the movies, he got a terrible asthma attack. It was so severe, that his friend realized she had to do something drastic. She stopped a passing car and explained the problem. As they raced to the hospital, the young man's breath stopped completely. However, his girlfriend was not planning to let him slip away, and she performed CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) onto him over and over again until they reached their destination, where he was rushed inside and placed on a ventilator. By giving him her breath, he stayed alive. They are now happily married and have a family. It would not have been possible without sharing her breath in those critical moments.

Breathing is possible through the air around us, and we all know that we would not survive if that was gone. The earth, our common home, harbors the right amount of oxygen and the perfect temperature to provide us with the conditions to stay alive. But that, too, is something we don't consider often enough. Instead,



we mainly focus on things that disrupt our peace of mind, such as trying to own a more advanced car than our neighbor, or wear a more expensive dress than our friend, or acquire a higher position than our colleague. We want to impress, and we are filled with the ambition to do so. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as long as it does not become such an obsession that it entirely disrupts our joy in life. It is critical to regularly keep the bigger picture in mind, and the funny thing is, that the bigger picture is captured in the modest things. But without the basic conditions, which we all share and need, there would be none of our daily strife.

So, here's to the gift of breathing.

### ***The gift of today***

*One today is worth two tomorrows*

-Benjamin Franklin

The fact that you are reading this note indicates that you received the gift of being alive, the gift of reading, the gift of understanding, the gift of the medium through which you read this, and the gift of time to do so. Along with all these gifts come others, such as the gift of breathing in order to be alive, and the gift of thinking in order to understand.

While you may or may not take all these gifts for granted: there is one you most surely forget to appreciate as a gift now and then: the gift of today. In spite of the fact that we call today the present, we often take it for granted because we get caught in so many other things: hectic schedules, concerns about our health, our financial situation, work related problems, family or other issues, you name it. But today is here: it came, and is slowly progressing. It will last exactly 24 hours, which equals 1,440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds. Today resembles our life in that regard: it is limited



and dying from the moment it is born. Here are three important thoughts to consider about today:

- 1) Once today is gone, it never comes back, so everything you do now will be history from tomorrow on. If you behave rash and do something you regret later, you may try to correct it -and even succeed-, but you will never be able to undo it. This also means that today is an important foundation for the rest of your life, because you are making choices and decisions that will affect your future.
- 2) You have a limited number of days available in your life, and no one knows how many you have left. Anything that is available in a limited supply is considered a scarce good in economic terms. With everything becoming increasingly edgy, and the pace of life picking up continuously, this scarce day cannot be wasted. Of course it depends on you to determine what "wasting" your day looks like, but I'm sure you know.
- 3) Today is a great beginning, because it's the first day of the rest of your life. No matter what you did in the past: today offers you a chance to start something wonderful. If there is a dream you wanted to realize, today is a good day to seriously start working on it. If you wanted to change a bad habit or correct something wrong, today is a great day to do that. There is nothing that cannot happen today, so why not make it happen?

A Chinese proverb states,  
*Today is the tomorrow we worried about yesterday. Make sure you don't make today the yesterday you regret tomorrow...*



## Endnote

There is an infinite supply of gifts to our disposal, which we enjoy, yet overlook as being gifts, until we are in danger of losing them. There is no need to let it get so far. We can start enjoying a happier life from here on if we stop now and then, and contemplate of some of our invaluable gifts, which make us the special beings we are today.

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