

# Vitality in daily life

*what is the source ?*

*what hinders ?*

*what assists ?*

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## Is it possible . . .

### to reconnect with the source of vitality in daily life?

Watch a child at play. They seem absorbed in a source of vitality and joy drawn from simply being in the present moment. As the child grows into adulthood they seem to lose connection with that source of vitality. Even though they may still experience extraordinary moments of vitality, ongoing connection is often hindered by the pressures, routines, responsibilities and challenges of everyday living.<sup>i</sup>

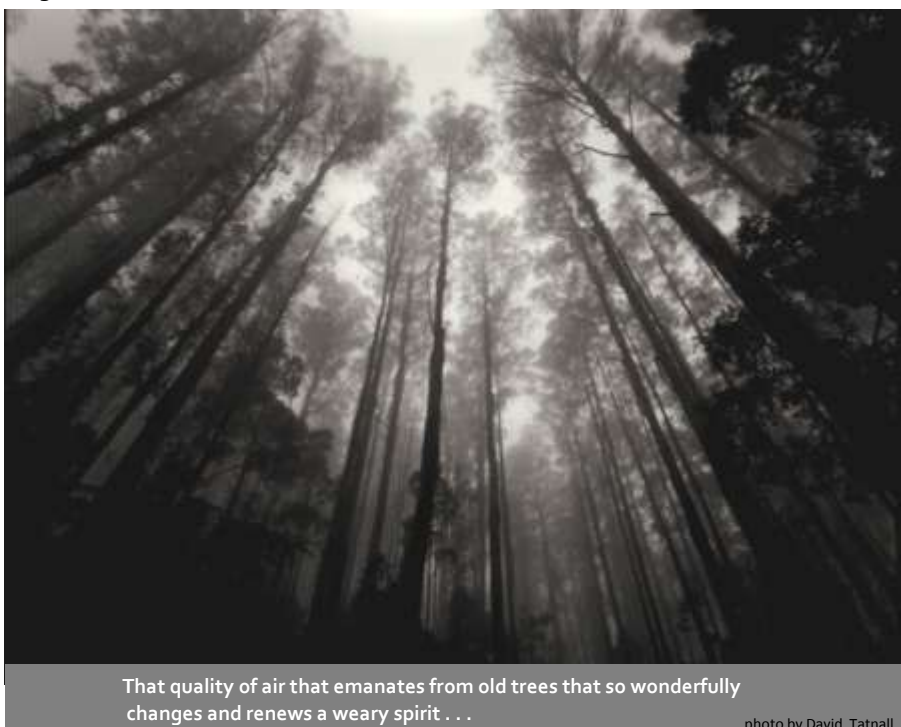


## What is the source of vitality in daily life?

The source of vitality in daily life is the *present moment*, or, *the Now*.

The present moment is not an "observable object or for that matter a definable concept."<sup>ii</sup> Even so, we need some understanding of the term as an entry point for reconnection. The following two images offer such an entry point.

### Image one: old trees



Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, "it is not so much for their beauty that a forest makes a claim upon our hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanates from old trees that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit."

In a similar vein the present moment is like that subtle something, indefinable and yet when experienced we can say, "we know that quality within us!" One way of naming such a quality is "a deep, open state of awareness"<sup>iii</sup> within us which has no beginning and no end. As such, the present moment is not a goal to be pursued. Rather the present moment is a capacity within us which is grounded in our bodies and finds expression in our daily living. Such a capacity is experienced as a resting place within, even in times of great turmoil in our lives. The resting place is not experienced as an escape mechanism. Rather as a gentle, dynamic, courageous holding place which orientates the way we live and act in our world.

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The resting place . . . a gentle, dynamic, courageous holding place.

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### Image two: the sunrise



The sun rises above the visible horizon . . . silently . . . peacefully . . . heralding the beginning of a new day. Each day unique in itself. Each day unscripted and yet full of possibility and potential. Each day flowing from the one before and flowing into the one that follows. Therefore, with each sunrise there is a sense of both new beginnings and continuity.

In a similar way to the image of the sunrise, the present moment is experienced as a continual returning to the beginning of ourselves.<sup>iv</sup> A continual returning to the unscripted part of ourselves. A continual returning to that part of ourselves where we know our own uniqueness and also know that we share in the one heartbeat of Life Itself. As such, the present moment is experienced as both new beginnings and continuity with all that has been and all that is to be.

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The present moment is experienced as both new beginnings and continuity.

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Qualities within the present moment are "stillness and presence."<sup>v</sup>

### Stillness

- \* continually returning our "minds to the beginning of ourselves,"<sup>vi</sup> beyond identification with particular storylines
- \* where our unique Selfhood is recognized within the still 'I am' of our being

### Presence

The stillness is not experienced as an empty void. Rather the stillness is experienced as a dynamic, ever-flowing energy of lovingkindness, creativity, joy, trust, compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, wisdom and the possibility of personal transformation.



the stillness is experienced as a dynamic ever-flowing energy

photo by Kaye Twining

## How do we reconnect with the source of vitality?

We commence with intention. Intention involves the choice to make a commitment to live daily life within the light (conscious awareness) of the present moment.

.....  
... intention ... intention ... intention ... intention ... intention ... intention ...  
.....

Even though we intention to live daily life within the light of the present moment, it is important to remember that intention does not involve forcing or controlling the process in order to finally 'get it.' Remembering that the present moment is not a goal to be pursued, intention here involves choosing to remaining open and receptive to the present moment as the primary reference point for the way we live and act in everyday life.

## Why would we bother?

So that we may live daily life with inner freedom, meaning and purpose. In turn, we experience authentic belonging within our own Self, our wider communities, and within the larger Earth community.

.....  
To experience inner freedom and authentic belonging.  
.....

## What hinders . . . from reconnecting with the present moment?

A major hindrance to reconnecting with the present moment is being stuck and/or entangled within particular storylines.<sup>vii</sup> Such a statement may require further explanation.

To be human is to seek to give meaning to our living and our dying. We seek meaning through the questions we pose around identity, purpose and belonging. Questions such as, "Where did we come from?" "Where do we go when we die?" "What is our purpose?" "How do we experience belonging?" "Is there a God?" The responses we discover to our questions form the Story<sup>viii</sup> we live by. Such a Story forms a unified sense of Self-in-life. From such an experience of Selfhood we live meaningfully in our world at any given time.

The responses we discover to our meaning making questions do not emerge within a vacuum. They emerge through the network of relationships within our environment, i.e., the norms, values and beliefs of family, community, friends, culture, religious tradition. Our responses also depend on our ongoing lived experience which may affirm or challenge our current view of Selfhood. Therefore, the responses we discover to our meaning giving questions are not static. The responses may change quite considerably over a lifetime.

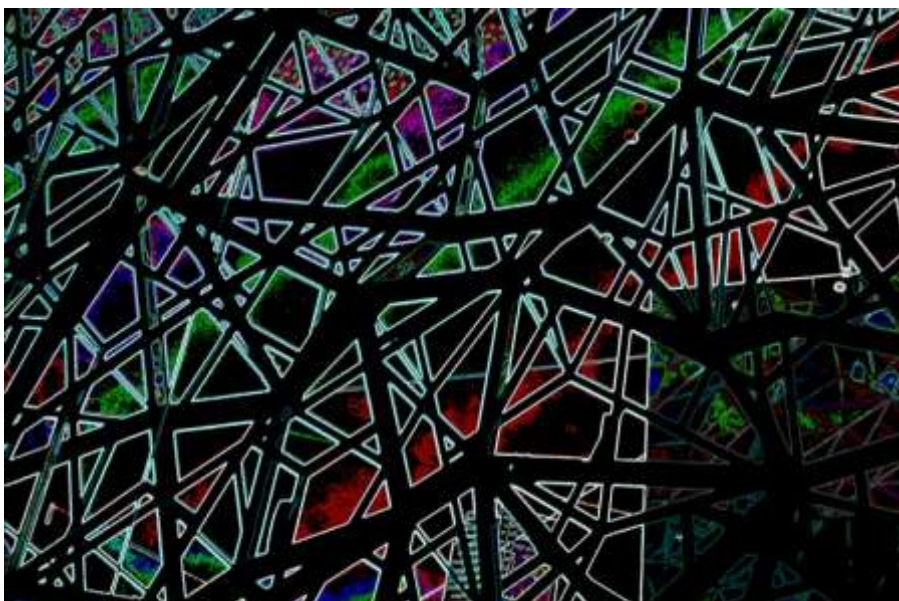
Our Story involves our reflection on and articulated interpretation of our lived experience, which in turn gives rise to a particular field of vision, or what Bernard Lonergan names as, "horizon of meaning."<sup>ix</sup> Even though our Story involves subjective interpretation, it is not fiction. Rather our Story holds our truth, as truth relates to meaning making. As such, our Story shapes our value system which in turn determines the way we live and act in our world.

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Our Story is truth, as truth relates to meaning making.

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Herein lies a paradox: To be human is to live through Story. / Eckhart Tolle wrote, "Put your story away. It is not who you are."<sup>x</sup> Which statement is true? Both statements bear truth, even as they seemingly contradict each other. The truth within each statement is that we humans live meaningfully through Story and we are more than a Story. When we become overly identified with a particular Story we become entangled or stuck within particular storylines, even when they have become redundant. When this occurs we lose connection with the present moment and a particular storyline becomes the primary reference point through which we live and act in our world.



we may become entangled or stuck within particular storylines

photo by Kaye Twining

## What assists . . . in reconnecting with the present moment?

As well as intention, there are two particular genres of practice which assist us to reconnect with the present moment and disentangle ourselves from particular storylines which have now become redundant.

### 1. Stillness meditation

The particular meditation practice appropriate here is one which leads us towards the unscripted resting place within. Such meditation practice may include breath awareness, centering prayer, walking meditation, sitting in bushland, listening to music . . .

### 2. Compassionate self-knowledge

Continuing to grow in compassionate self-knowledge in response to life experience, allows us to recognize where we are entangled within particular storylines. From there we have the choice to grow through them, or not. However, we are consciously making the choice.

Compassionate self-knowledge differs from analysis where the intention is to probe, scrutinize and dissect. Also compassionate self-knowledge differs from personal development where the intention is to change aspects of ourselves. In contrast, the intention of compassionate self-knowledge is to befriend who we know ourselves to be in the here and now, while remaining open to transformational shifts in our view (Story), if and when necessary. (For more on transformation see *The Sacred Work Of Being Human/The Art of Transformative Living*.)

As we continue to grow in compassionate self-knowledge the fabric of our daily living becomes like a beautifully woven cloth where the threads of Self, other, past, present and future are woven together in a vibrant, dynamic pattern.<sup>xi</sup>

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the fabric of our daily living becomes like a beautifully woven cloth

photo by Kaye Twining

## A practice for growing in compassionate self-knowledge

The focus of this practice is to:

1. **notice** what is happening within us in the present moment with an attitude of self compassion, nonjudgmental curiosity and playfulness;
2. **gently open up** and explore what we have noticed within the light of our current values, beliefs and life experience;
3. **listen for the** whisper of our inner wisdom in the form of emerging insights and understandings.

### The practice

#### 1. Noticing (as far as possible without judging as good/bad or trying to modify)

*What do I notice happening in my body?*

e.g. relaxing / tightening, warming / cooling, opening up / contracting . . .

*What do I notice happening with my feelings?*

e.g. delighted, sad, angry, joyful, stressed, fearful, alive, jealous, challenged . . .

*What do I notice happening with my thinking?*

e.g. is my thinking judgmental, compassionate, circular, racing, calm, stuck in a habitual pattern . . .

#### 2. Letting be

As you are able, simply hold your present moment experience within the gentle light of loving kindness . . . breathing through your experience without denying / resisting / seeking change and/or resolution.

#### 3. Listening and waiting

If and when you are ready, some open-ended questions which could be helpful to ask yourself:

I wonder why my body is responding in this way?

Is this sensation or emotion tapping into a particular area in my life?

If this sensation / emotion / image had a voice, what might it say to me?

Is there a color / shape / texture / image / piece of music that seems to encompass it? If so, feel free to draw it; sculpt it; express it in prose or poetry; listen to the piece of music . . .



within the gentle light of lovingkindness

#### 4. What may inner wisdom be inviting you to see or see afresh in this moment?

Again some open-ended questions to ask yourself:

Is there any insight arising for me?

Am I being invited to stay / move / change / grow?

Do not try to dig around, force, think out or manufacture anything. Simply wait for a response to emerge, try it on and see how it fits. Do not worry if there is no discernible response as yet. Simply pose the question and live into the response.<sup>xiii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Richard Moss, *The Mandela of Being: Discovering the Power of Awareness*

<sup>ii</sup> John Swinton, *Spirituality and Mentalhealthcare*. While Swinton employed this phrase to the human spirit, it would seem appropriate for the present moment as well.

<sup>iii</sup> Richard Moss, *The Mandela of Being*

<sup>iv</sup> Richard Moss, *The Mandela of Being*

<sup>v</sup> Richard Moss, *The Mandela of Being*

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- vi Richard Moss, *The Mandela of Being*
- vii Both Tolle and Moss write on the way over identification with Story disconnects us from the present moment
- viii For more on Story see Kaye Twining: MA Thesis entitled "*The contribution of a spiritual director to the spiritual journey of a person diagnosed with bipolar disorder.*"
- ix Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*
- x Eckhart Tolle's, *Findhorn Retreat: Stillness amidst the World*
- xi Richard Moss, *The Mandela of Being*
- xii Richard Moss, *The Mandela of Being*
- xiii Poet Rainer Maria Rilke, *Live the questions now*