

## The Power of Now

The Power of Now is another book that has helped to change a lot of lives including MMP sponsor Tim McGavin and his brother Rob McGavin who is currently Chairman of Marcus Oldham. This is the book they most often give as gifts. It was a New York Times Best Seller and has been published in 33 languages. It came to prominence in 2000 when Oprah Winfrey recommended it.

The book is written by Eckart Tolle. Tolle is not an academic, he writes from experience and in simple and easy to understand terms.

It explains that in most people, the tool has taken over the master, that is the mind has taken us over. Our minds are constantly chatting away to us in the background, either replaying the past or anticipating the future, over and over. Most of us don't realise this so it is very beneficial to those of us who work it out.

The reason this book is called the Power of Now is that it attempts to get the reader to focus attention in the "now" (the moment you are in, not thinking about what's happened in the past or what might happen in the future). Harvest or muster the paddock you are in rather than worry about the big picture.

Tolle says **"you can always handle the now but problems arise when you get swept up in the past or the future, the what if's, could have's and should have's"**.

High achievers have often mastered the ability to be aware of their longer-term goals whilst at the same time give their full attention to the task they are doing Now, in order to achieve those goals.

We recommend that you read this book-

This book is philosophical, it can be confronting but has helped to change our lives so we encourage you to have an open mind.

You may find the following links helpful:

- A 15 min cartoon book summary - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgGtNgLSCqU>
- A series of Oprah Winfrey and Eckart Tolle webinar interview that had 11mill live viewers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leN7mdCCIB8>

We have attempted to highlight the main lessons in the summary below.

- Mindfulness or inner peace is when you stop the stream of thoughts in your mind and just be. It is a state of no mind. For most of us, it is painful to stop and just be, so we distract ourselves by doing things
- It all starts with awareness. Instead of being consumed by your thoughts, take a step back and see if you can observe them
- Try this exercise. Close your eyes, breathe, scan your body for feelings, tightness, points of uncomfortableness. Also observe your thoughts, don't judge them just observe them. You may notice gaps in your thoughts. These gaps are very short at first but the more you do this, the longer the gaps become. You train yourself to be more present
- The value in this method is that over time, you learn not to take your thinking as seriously, you worry less which means you should be healthier, happier, wiser and wealthier, why?
  - Healthier – Constant worry can lead to stress and anxiety, a heightened state where your body thinks you are under attack, so amongst other things, it pumps more blood. Over time this can cause serious health issues.

- Happier – you won't constantly be waiting for something in the future to make you happy, or constantly dwelling on things that happened in the past, you will experience more happiness and joy now
- Wiser – If you are present, then you have better access to your knowledge. If you can disassociate with fear or worry driven thoughts and tap into your inner wisdom (your intuition) then you should make much better decisions and hence become wiser.
- Wealthier –one would think that if you can be healthier, happier and wiser then you should optimise your earning capacity as you will be more productive and valuable to your boss and business

### **Thinking**

- 90% of most people's thinking is not only repetitive and useless but because of its dysfunctional and often negative nature much of it is harmful.
- Not being able to stop thinking is a dreadful affliction but we don't realise because everybody is suffering from it.
- Mental noise prevents you from finding inner peace and enjoying the now (this moment right now).
- Compulsive thinking is an addiction. It gives us a false sense of pleasure that usually turns into pain. People derive their sense of self from the content and activity of their mind.
- The mind is a superb instrument used correctly, however used wrongly it becomes very destructive.
- As you grow up, you form a mental image of who you are. We call this the "ego"
- Ego is a false self-created unconscious identification of the mind. To the ego the present moment does not exist; only the past and the future are considered important.
- The mind is a survival machine, attacking and defending, gathering, storing and analysing information. It is not at all creative. All true artists create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness
- You need to find the "off" button to stop yourself over thinking

### **Thinking and the Mind**

- The delusion is that you believe that you are your mind (you're thinking about yourself and who you are, which is often a very different version than what others think)
- Our internal dialogue is most often not relevant to what is going on at the time. It is usually reviving the recent or distant past or rehearsing or imagining future situations. The state of your imagining things going wrong or negative outcomes is worry. Even if the voice is relevant to the situation at hand it will interpret it in terms of the past.
- Many people live with a tormentor in their head who continually attacks and punishes them and drains them of vital energy.

### **How to stop thinking**

- The single most important step in the process of mindfulness is to learn to dis-identify with your mind (stop the thinking noise)
- It is vital that your sense of self does not depend on your thinking

There are two ways to stop thinking.

1. Refocusing your attention – Try this exercise

- Direct the focus of your attention into the now. Just become intensely conscious of the present moment
  - Concentrate and observe your breathing and become present but don't try to control your breathing
  - Scan your body for physical feelings such as tightness around the neck and shoulders, don't judge them, just observe them. You may find that by observing them the tightness eases. This is your body relaxing as your mind relaxes
  - This is what meditation is all about
  - Take a routine task that you would do every day and give it your full attention
2. Watching the thinker
- Learn to observe the voice in your head; witness its presence
  - Don't judge or condemn what you hear, for doing so will mean that the same voice has come in again
  - Soon you will realise "there is the voice and here I am listening to it". This "I am" realisation, the sense of your own presence, is not a thought: it arises beyond the mind. You have distanced yourself from the thinker and are dis-attaching yourself from it
  - This will bring about a new dimension of consciousness, when you listen to a thought and are aware not only of the thought but also yourself as the witness of the thought
  - The thought then loses its power over you. This is the beginning of the end of involuntary and compulsive thinking. A small gap of "no mind" is established. You are experiencing "the present". You will be more alert, awake and at peace with yourself and others around you

### **The delusion of time**

- This is a hard concept to comprehend but very powerful and useful once you do
- Anytime other than now is an illusion. The past is gone and is not coming back. It no longer exists. The future does not exist yet so it is pointless thinking too much about it. Your intuition, knowledge and planning can still work perfectly to achieve without 99% of the thinking noise of memory and anticipation
- Fully understand that it is physically impossible to be in the past or the future, only the now so the now is all you have
- If you are identified with your mind you are trapped in time. You will be living almost exclusively through memory (the past) and anticipation (of the future). You will be unable to acknowledge the present moment (*the now, the most precious thing there is*). This compulsion exists because the past gives you an identity and the future holds the promise of fulfilment: both are illusions
- The now is the most precious thing as it is the only thing - its all there is. There was never a time when your life was not now, nor will there ever be. Now is the only point that can take you beyond the limited confines of the mind and into being
- Nothing ever happened in the past - it happened in the now. Past events are only a memory stored in the mind. They are totally irrelevant now. They are gone forever, unless of course we allow our mind to relive them
- Reliving negative events is pointless
- Nothing will ever happen in the future it will happen in the now. The future is an imagined now (something you imagine now). It is a projection of the mind. When the future comes, it comes as the now.
- Past and future have no reality of their own, just reflections or imaginations of our mind. Their reality is "borrowed" (stolen) from the Now.

In summary it is important to take your mind away from what happened in the past and stop worrying about what may happen in the future. Your intuition, skill and knowledge in making decisions now is only hindered from your thinking about past and future.

### **Emotion**

- An emotion is an amplified thought.
- Thinking and emotion feed each other in a vicious cycle
- All emotions are modifications of one primary emotion - usually fear or pain
- Emotion arises at the place where mind and body meet. It is the body's reaction to the mind
- An attack thought (a hostile thought) will create a build-up of energy in the body - anger. The body is ready to fight
- If you cannot or do not feel your emotions, you will eventually experience them on the purely physical level (a physical problem or symptom), this is how we can often feel stress in our bodies, neck and shoulders
- People who are angry inside will be more likely to be attacked verbally or physically by other people. Other angry people will pick up on their anger subliminally. Watch who gets into fights at the pub
- To feel your emotions, concentrate on focussing your attention on scanning your body for feelings, tightness, discomfort etc. Feel the body within you
- Sometimes there is a conflict - the mind says no while the emotion says yes
- A thought is in your head whereas an emotion has a strong physical presence and is usually felt in your body
- If you really want to know your mind, the body will always give you a truthful reflection. So look at the emotion, feel it in your body. If there is an apparent conflict the thought will be the lie. This is why you hear people say "it didn't feel right"
- It is easy to get to know your emotions (physical bodily forms). Always be aware of what they are trying to tell you

### **Controlling Emotion**

- Use the same process as controlling thinking. Become the observer of your emotions - allow the emotion to be there without being controlled by it
- You no longer *are* the emotion; you are the watcher of it
- Over time, with practice you will eliminate most of the current emotion that impacts your life. Ask yourself, "what is going on inside of me at present"?

### **Problems are illusions of the mind**

- There are no problems, only situations to be dealt with now or to be left alone and be accepted as part of life and not to be dwelled over
- Problems are mind made and need time to survive
- "Problem" means that you are dwelling on a situation mentally without there being a true intention or possibility of taking action now and that you are unconsciously making it part of your sense of self
- Life situation is mind stuff, its in your head. Everyone has problems - that is life. Do you have any problem at this moment (Now), not tomorrow or in 10 minutes but right now?
- When you are full of problems there is not room for anything new to enter, no room for a solution
- If you won \$100mill you would just be a rich person with the same problems
- If you have been in a life or death situation you will know that it was not a problem. The mind didn't have time to fool around and make it into a problem. The mind stops, you become totally present. Either you survive or you don't. Either way it is not a problem at the time, we may tag it as a problem when looking back at it sometime in the future.

### Acceptance of what is

- Survivors of imprisonment and particularly the those who survived the concentration camps were the ones who accepted what is. They took responsibility for what they could control which was how they dealt with the hand they were given at the time, their perception.
- Try to catch yourself complaining, either through speech or thought. Complaining is when you are not accepting what is, you are playing a victim, either accept it or change it
- Be completely accepting of the moment you are in without resistance
- You may think that the situation you are in creates suffering but that is not true, your resistance creates the pain
- There is often a gap between what your expectations are and what is. This is what creates pain
- You have the choice to say no or walk away from situations. You don't have to accept the overall situation but just the segment you are in now (the Now). Take responsibility for this.
- Accepting what is, is yielding to rather than opposing the flow of life and the only place you can experience the flow of life is now, so accept the present unconditionally
- High achievers are aware of their goals but they give your full attention to the task they are doing now, in order to achieve those goals. They may not like what they have to do now but they surrender to it and accept it if it is necessary

### Life's journey

- Life has an inner purpose and an outer purpose.
  - The outer purpose is to arrive at your goal or destination, to accomplish what you set out to do.
  - The inner purpose has nothing to do with *where* you are going or *what* you are doing but everything to do with *how*, the quality of your life right now
- It is possible to fail completely in life's outer purpose and at the same time totally succeed in your inner purpose or the other way around.

### Summary

- If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place.
- You are not your thoughts
- Become an observer of your thoughts
- The present moment is all we have so practice and learn to be more grounded in it
- Surrender to the Now and accept what is
- When you catch yourself judging, criticizing, rejecting, labelling, feeling sorry for yourself or trying to change people or situations, you know you are not accepting what is.

If you want this book but cannot afford it, please contact the college and Tim McGavin will buy it for you.