

Inspired Life Formula with Nina Lockwood

Module 2 Explore Your Spirit

Exercise 3 Presence

This is Nina Lockwood, and Welcome to the Inspired Life Formula, Module 2, Exercise number 3, Present Moment Awareness.

I'm calling this practice Presence, or present-moment awareness. Throughout the wisdom traditions, there are many names for this process. You become present by bringing all your attention to this present moment, and realizing that what you're noticing is what and who you are.

Most of us go through our day preoccupied with what's happened in the past or what might happen in the future - what has to get done, what we need to plan for, or avoid or what we should have done or wish hadn't happened and we go over and over these memories and assumptions about the future so that we default into automatic pilot with what's right in front of us in the moment. When we stop to think about it, we can see how easy it is to get caught up in what's going on in our heads instead of experiencing everything else besides thought that's happening in the moment. Even when we're doing something important or necessary and meaningful, we can totally miss the richness of what's happening inside us as well as outside of us when our attention is elsewhere. Now, I know most if not all of you have had the experience of present-moment awareness more than once in your lives; when you are in a magnificent place in nature, or when you listen to a wonderful piece of music, or when you stand in front of a piece of art or great poetry. Your mind is silenced by something much greater and more profound and you find your awareness is heightened while your sense of yourself either drops away or finds that it is part of a much larger context. It's possible to increase the amount of time that you are in this expanded state of being so that you can live your life from a much deeper, richer, more meaningful and more fulfilling place.

Now if you've already tried ways to silence the mind, you know it can be quite a challenge to find quiet in your head for more than a few moments, because after a while the thoughts start up again. All the meditation

techniques address this challenge, either by having you place all your focus on one thing, like a flame or a mantra or the breath, which brings your focus to to a single point that requires all your attention, so that the mind has something to do and the mental chatter subsides. And as your focus remains on that one thing, your attention is naturally drawn away from the sounds or images in the head. And what do you find when your attention moves from the past or future centered thinking to the awareness of this moment? Everything. There is a sense of always-been-here, the is-ness of things, a fullness, a love that's not dependent on behavior but is the ground of everything; a deep sense of belonging. You no longer have to put up an adversarial or defensive front because there's nothing that isn't a part of you, everything shares the same essence. There is no need to search outside yourself to find yourself because you are already everywhere here. All the stories drop away and you simply "be" the experience of this all-encompassing presence.

The experience of what Catherine Ingram refers to as "awakened awareness" completely eclipses the need for any pursuit of meaning or purpose because those concepts become meaningless when we have the direct experience of our inner wisdom through this presence-based silence.

You'll find your own way with this practice; there are many ways to find yourself in this awakened awareness by chance and our intention is to invite this awareness into our experience whenever it occurs to us so that it becomes the foundation for how we live in the world. And just to clarify: I'm not suggesting that you drop everything and become blissed out so that you can't function. The exact opposite happens. You find a clarity, an ease, a grace with which your actions are embodied. That same force that we referred to when we spoke of allowing for the benefit of others is what we are welcoming into the very essence of our being, so that our essence can be lit up and seen to be the essence of all being. This can actually inform your life rather than take you out of it. As with all the practices we engage with in this program, do your best to keep track of your experiences in your journal - the easy parts or the hard bits, what helps you or what appears to get in your way. This practice is easiest to do when you're in a relatively quiet place and not subject to being disturbed, but eventually you'll be able to drop into this awakened awareness at other times during your day - the

hectic or demanding moments where everything can light up and transform your experience and bring deep, deep peace.

I'll lead you through this exercise that's drawn from several spiritual teachers' recommendations. It takes just a few moments and helps you invite your own awakened awareness to emerge. Remember that you don't need to use anyone's specific directions - take them as "pointers" and find what works for you.....

So, as you are comfortably seated or lying down, with your eyes closed or softly focused, just take a breath and do your best to let everything drop away. As much as you're able, put aside your to-do list, your regrets or your expectations and just be.... Let your breath come and go on it's own accord, allow any tightness in your muscles to melt....if it helps, focus all your attention on your heart. putting all your attention on that one place so that your mind is in service of your intention...then begin to notice what else is here in addition to your heart beating. Let yourself become aware of the subtle presence of the life force, that permeates everything....and then, notice, too, a sense of being - your being - and the being-ness of everything around you....notice the sense of stillness... and whether that stillness contains a sense of completeness...maybe there are no words to describe what you're noticing, only THAT you are noticing. There's no searching for concepts like meaning or purpose because everything in your awareness already has meaning or purpose in and of itself. Notice, as best you can, that inner stillness has the quality of connection.. nothing is separate from you beyond the most superficial of details. Where do you end and where does "other" begin? What would it be like if you knew you were the wave AND the ocean, different only in your changing form and transitory nature. Can you notice how your sense of the me that's been created and defined by memories disappears into a sense of is-ness that transcends those memories? Perhaps you notice there's no words, no self, you're just here.....You may need to keep refocusing your attention on your heart so that the mind settles down, maybe just humming in the background, and that's just fine. And if you feel as though your efforts have been too results-driven or you haven't had the experience you wanted to, let that be okay too. You're creating the space in your being into which that awakened awareness can emerge. Sometimes it happens in an instant, sometimes it's a matter of holding the space until you catch a glimpse of it.

No effort is ever wasted, and all efforts count more than you will ever know. So As best you can, just let yourself soften into this felt experience of what may feel like both the known and the unknown, and when this feels complete for you, let yourself express gratitude in whatever way is meaningful for you, and allow yourself to come back gently and easily into the everyday world of form and action.