

Time Passing

Time is measured as the space between our thoughts and the never-ending stream of them . . . Since the present is always here, now, it is already outside of time passing. Jon Kabat-Zinn

Glance down at your wristwatch. When was the last time you didn't wear a watch? I'll bet you can't remember. (No, this doesn't include removal of said timepiece en route to catch some nighttime zzzzzs). Was it during a weekend, perhaps when you were in the midst of a home project, say cleaning out the shop in the basement or raking leaves? Certainly it was not during the week when our time is typically overscheduled, over-focused, over-full.

Our complicated lives are so oriented around time that we're hard-pressed to leave home without our strapped on devices. We live our lives by the clock, allowing the digits on the dial to drive us to the next activity, project, obligation. I'm guilty as well; at last count I have six, yes, six watches. And, I daresay that number may be on the low side. A friend of mine boasted about his collection of sixteen snazzy watches, complete with their own display cases. It's almost as if we think that if we don't keep track of our time, that we'll lose it somehow. And, maybe there's something to it.

My mom told me years ago that time passes more quickly as we get older. Then I thought that she was just being silly; now I think she was not only right, but wise. In fact, Ray Kurzweil, a leading scientist-inventor of amazing technology, has a theory that supports mom's contention. And, it just may have implications for the future fate of your wristwatch.

In Kurzweil's *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, he states his Law of Time and Chaos. This law states that our subjective sense of time passing is regulated by the interval between what we assess to be 'milestones' or notable experiences in our lives, and the existing 'degree of chaos' at the time.

For example, when you go on vacation (milestone event) likely having not been to that location previously (increase in chaos since it's all new and novel), time seems to move more slowly.

When you're back home (familiar territory) and return to work (less chaos because you *know* what's in your routine), time moves more quickly. Enough of these days in succession and you have the sense that your days are being sucked out into the vacuum of years flying by like vapor.

Of course. babies and small children have scads of notable milestones in their development. Because the intervals between them are short, our childhood time seems to move slowly, sometimes recalled with a dream-like quality. As we get older the intervals between our significant events lengthens. This results in our sense of time moving quite quickly.

Short of actually creating a steady stream of novel, noteworthy experiences: white water rafting down the Colorado River, skydiving in New Zealand, or even dining at Zagat's highly acclaimed Zia's Trattoria in Chicago, you could simply pay attention to your ordinary moments, thereby making them quite noteworthy.

Of course, you may be thinking, how naive! What about all the deadlines and distasteful co-workers, the decisions to be made? Believe it or not, you can even bring a sense of wonder to your attention of difficult events, noticing them as if brand new. In doing so, you're intentionally shifting your attention from *chronos*, or linear time, to *kairos* or spherical time or, said another way, the eternal moment.

By paying attention in such a way, even to the apparent chaos at work, you'll begin to notice the timeless quality of the present moment. You'll likely not only begin to de-stress, but also begin to notice the vividness of your life: the play of light through the morning window, the autumn colors out your window, and the pungent scent of your coffee.

And for those moments you're truly pressed for time, feeling the urgency of the minutes ticking away, you can *choose* to be fully present. As a result you thereby incur a net gain of more time by receiving back the fullness of each moment. You can still know what needs to be done by pausing, collecting or centering yourself, and then moving into the activity at hand.

The more you practice making some bits of time in your day to *not do but be*, the more your whole day becomes suffused with an awareness grounded in the present moment and therefore out side of time.

Do it, I dare you. Pay attention to your ordinary moments, even the seemingly unpleasant ones. Go a day without your wristwatch. Focus your attention on the ordinary in each day, each hour, and each moment. You may just find yourself leaving your timepiece permanently in its case.