

Are you wishing your life away?



By Eve Menezes Cunningham



Are you missing out on life by constantly looking forward?

Do you spend ages looking forward to things like school holidays only to start looking forward to the kids going back in September within the first week?

Maybe you spend most of your working weeks looking forward to the weekend or to getting home (or time off to being back at work)?

While it's brilliant to have things to look forward to, are you missing out on life by constantly looking forward?

In a world where Christmas displays start appearing months before and Easter eggs are put out by January, it's not surprising we've lost touch with the actual seasons we're in.

If you know your past / present / future focus tends to lean too much towards the future, you may want to experiment with slowing down a little.

And if the idea of slowing down feels stressful, ease into it. Just as taking a few breaks during the day helps us wind down enough for a good night's sleep, having schedules that acknowledge our humanity rather than trying to act like machines mean we're more likely to enjoy our time off.

Giving ourselves downtime on a daily basis will help our whole system relax regularly rather than working full out only to get ill on the first day of the holiday or after that big deadline.

Mindfulness has so many benefits but for those of us who are more naturally

future focused, taking a decade – I mean several minutes – to eat a raisin can feel far from relaxing.

This in itself is a great barometer to how present you're being. On a day when you're feeling pretty relaxed and at ease, it'll be easier to mindfully eat that raisin (or your dinner). When you're overwhelmed and stressed, it may give rise to some homicidal fantasies.

Please don't give up on yourself, though. Mindfulness is just one word for something that benefits all of us. You can look into other tools that can help you bring a more mindful approach to whatever you're doing.

Things like yoga and tai chi can help but you can use your walk, run, swim, bike ride, or whatever you enjoy doing to really pay attention to the present moment on purpose.

If you have a small child or a pet, they can be wonderful reminders to become more mindful. Rather than telling them 'Later', when it's possible, pause and be totally present to them. Use all your senses.

I consider the times Rainbow MagnifiCat jumps onto my lap when I'm trying to work bonus mindfulness meditations. I usually 'paws' whatever I'm doing and consider it Rainbow Appreciation Time, noticing the feel of her fur, sound of her purr and so on. I return to my work more refreshed and she seems to like the adoration.

And, of course, you don't need children or animals. They just tend to be quite demanding so can be useful ways to pull us into the present moment.

You might instead set a little (gentle) alarm throughout the day to encourage you to pause and just notice however you're feeling and tune into whatever you need. Little acts of self-care that suit your schedule.

We don't need to be so extreme in terms of working all hours and then completely relaxing on a beach or similar.

Instead of thinking so big, in terms of large chunks of time and space and far flung places, what kind of day trips might you want to do more of? What kind of lunches would help you feel you were giving yourself a break?

When you consider your schedule for the coming week, notice opportunities every day where you can pause to enjoy the present moment. This practice will be easier some days than others but will help you enjoy the big things even more. ●

