

The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment is a 1997 book by Eckhart Tolle. It's a spiritual focused guide for day-to-day living and focuses on how important it is to live in the moment without worrying about the past or future.

A 3 Minute Summary of the 15 Core Lessons

#1 Life is Always Just Present Moments

The main way to reframe your thinking in relation to this book is to consider life as a sequence of present moments. Rather than a story with a past, present, and future, this book suggests that all life ever is and will ever be is present moments one after another. This highlights the importance of making the most of the present-day rather than stressing about the past or future.

#2 Pain is Resisting Things you Can't Change

Tolle makes an argument that is very similar to Stoicism as a philosophy, stating that the only pain we experience comes from resisting the things we can't change. In a nutshell, we feel regret or fear about circumstances or experiences in our lives that we can't change. This pain is unnecessary, and we should stop worrying about things we can't effect for greater happiness.

#3 Free Yourself by Observation

One of the key ways in which you can get rid of the pain of anxiety and stress about the past or future is to observe your own thoughts without judging them. Simply being aware of what your mind is focusing on without constantly berating yourself for wasting time is usually enough to stop your anxiety or fear in its tracks. Simply notice whatever thought is giving you trouble, accept it, and move on.

#4 Full Attention to the Now

No matter where you are and what you're doing, you should always strive to provide your full attention to the present moment. This requires accepting whatever is happening, as you can't resist what is happening to you at the same time as fully experiencing it. This will make every experience richer and help you avoid anxiety and pain.

#5 Don't Let the Mind Wander

While it's important that you accept all the thoughts you experience, that doesn't mean you should let your brain wander without paying attention to the present moment. This will take practice, but Tolle stresses the importance of training yourself to refocus your mind on what is in front of you in the present moment.

#6 Acceptance is Not Defeat

Many think that talking so much about accepting your thoughts or your circumstances is the same thing as allowing defeat to rule your life. This is not the same thing. Accepting your circumstances means you can stop focusing on the pain that whatever negative thing in your life is causing you and begin to change it or act upon it.

#7 Focus on Positive Things

As you train your mind to focus on the present, you should simultaneously practice focusing on positive things in the present day rather than ruminating on negative things. This will eventually result in a happy feedback loop that causes your brain to feel encouraged when focusing on the present, as you will eventually expect good things rather than fearing bad ones.

#8 Avoid Complaining

Tolle makes it clear that complaining is an essentially negative behavior that does no good to anyone. It's also a huge roadblock when it comes to accepting the present moment. You should instead seek to adapt to your circumstances rather than lamenting the bad things in your life.

#9 The Past can Ruin the Future

Tolle explains that focusing excessively on the past can lead you to negative behaviors or terrible anxiety that ruins your future. You won't experience moments as they come to their fullest extent. Or you may make choices that are primarily to protect your emotional fragility rather than choices that are to your benefit.

#10 You Are Not Your Mind

The book's spiritual core shines through with this concept, which states that, as a person, you are a being of pure consciousness, love, and joy. You aren't your brain and all of the fear that comes with the organ within your skull. Becoming enlightened requires that you first recognize your pure consciousness, which is necessarily free from your body.

#11 The Ego is Tied to the Mind

The ego is best thought of as the mind's representation of itself, rather than your actual self-respect or your true representation. This is easily seen when you consider how you would describe yourself to a stranger. Chances are, most of your descriptions are related to external sources. Therefore, your ego is not your true self, as your true self is independent of any external source of validation.

#12 All Spiritual Teachings Are Similar

Tolle contends that all spiritual teachings come from the same primary source, which means that there has only ever been one spiritual master that has taken different forms across the centuries. This explains religion and any other types of spirituality that have helped humans deal with the inherent madness of their minds throughout history.

#13 Enlightenment Means Being Above the Mind

Tolle states that true enlightenment requires freeing yourself from the thoughts that echoed throughout your mind and body. He claims that this is why drugs and other mind-altering experiences like sex are so important to the human experience; they allow humans to momentarily leave their mind behind and exist on a deeper level.

#14 Enlightenment Means Openness

Once you've attained true spiritual enlightenment, you'll be entirely open to love and will accept your partner without any conditions. This ideal state is one that all should strive for, as it is the ultimate path to long-term human happiness.

#15 Enlightenment Becomes Calmness/Joy

The ultimate attainment of enlightenment is necessary for true happiness because it is the only way you can experience legitimate calmness or happiness. By focusing on the present and learning to accept and dismiss your thoughts, you'll escape the confines of your mind and biological body and experience yourself as true, unfiltered consciousness.

Top 10 Quotes from The Power of Now

1. "Realize deeply that the present moment is all you have. Make the NOW the primary focus of your life."
2. "I have lived with several Zen masters -- all of them cats."
3. "It is not uncommon for people to spend their whole life waiting to start living."
4. "If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place. Primary reality is within; secondary reality without."
5. "...The past gives you an identity and the future holds the promise of salvation, of fulfillment in whatever form. Both are illusions."
6. "What a caterpillar calls the end of the world we call a butterfly."
7. "Nothing has happened in the past; it happened in the Now. Nothing will ever happen in the future; it will happen in the Now."
8. "Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey only has one: the step you are taking right now."
9. "Where there is anger there is always pain underneath."
10. "Being an outsider to some extent, someone who does not "fit in" with others or is rejected by them for whatever reason, makes life difficult, but it also places you at an advantage as far as enlightenment is concerned. It takes you out of unconsciousness almost by force."