



Week Three: Reflective Guide

Stay Put: Practicing Presence as a Path to Renewal

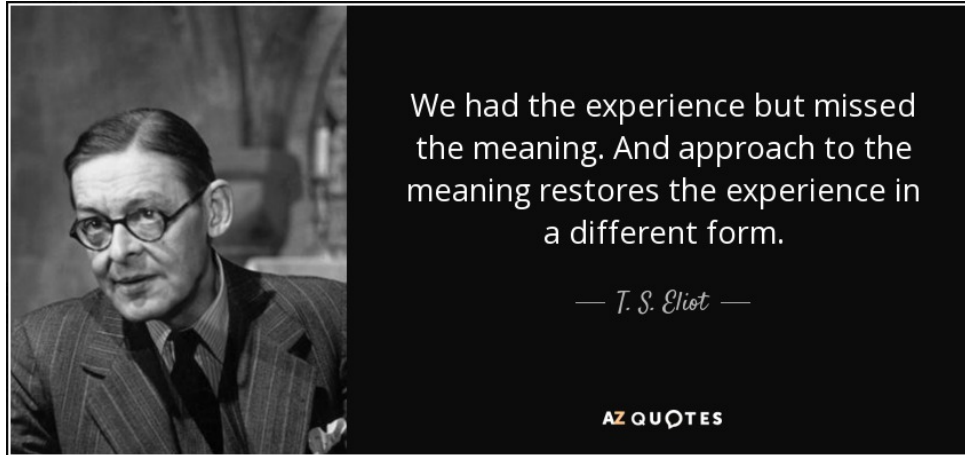
Setting the Stage

In our third installment of the Begin Again series, we explored the practice of “presencing.” Presencing, as we defined it, is the ability to consciously return to the moment and stay longer in it. This is simple but challenging practice (of presencing) opens us to the most basic fresh start – the one happening NOW. In one very real sense, it’s the only fresh start we have – our ability to be present to the moment and stay in it longer.

Questions to Ponder/Discuss: Think about and describe a time you were present to the moment and were able to sustain that presence.

- What was happening in the moment and why do you think you were able to stay put in that moment?
- What can you learn from that moment that could help you practice presencing throughout your day?

A Quote to Ponder – Take time to read and reflect on this quote



Question to Ponder/Discuss:

- This quote has two distinct segments (first and second sentence). Ponder/Discuss each segment and reflect on what each sentence means to you and how you can practice it.

Practicing Presencing

Four actions can help us return to the moment and stay longer in a moment.

- Penetrate Your Awareness
- Locate and Re-member Yourself
- Stay Put Longer Once You've Arrived

1. *Penetrate Your Awareness*

We fall asleep. This means we, as humans, have the tendency to lose awareness of the moment. There are ways to bring ourselves back to a place of awareness. Here are two.

- Design external breakthroughs - Visual and verbal cues, alarms, and spiritual practices
- Utilize daily opportunities – Let the moments of the day (situations and relationships) beckon you to awareness

Question to Ponder/Discuss – Idea to Practice

How can you use the above ideas, or others, to bring you back to a place of awareness in any given moment? Determine two or three actions you will take to penetrate your awareness this week.

Quote to Ponder

I see my life as an unfolding set of opportunities to awaken.

Ram Dass

2/3. Locate and Re-Member Yourself



Practice Locating and Re-membering

Try this exercise:

- Take five deep breaths – exhale longer than the inhale
- Either verbally or inwardly, tell yourself where you are, even describing the environment around you
- Scan your emotional condition, noticing moods and emotions
- Describe what you are doing
- Say, “I am here in this moment. I bring my mind back to my body and this moment”
- Tell yourself what you are doing and why it matters

Reflect/Discuss

What was it like to practice this? What might change about your day, about your ability to experience fresh starts (during the day), if you regularly practiced this (throughout the day)?

4. Stay Put Longer Once You’ve Arrived

Once your awareness is engaged, stay longer in the moment.

We can stay longer in the moment in several ways:

- Stay focused on your task at hand which should be to improve something
- To let go and allow your awareness to expand and relax
- To practice presencing in the midst of activity. This means coming back to the place of awareness as soon as you've lost it. This can be done even in the midst of activity. Mantras are helpful for this practice.

Quote to Ponder

The present moment is never simply to be accepted as it is. Because part of it is constructed in the present, it can always be improved; it can even be turned into the path to the end of suffering. But because it's *always* under construction, it's at best only the path, never the goal. To borrow an image from the canon, the present is like a house that constantly needs repair, not just because it keeps disintegrating right before your eyes, never to return, but also because it's on fire with the flames of suffering. The path of practice is not meant to keep you in the house. Its function is to help you find the way out.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu