



Six Ways to be More Present in Your Relationships

1. Breathe consciously.

This is perhaps the easiest method to draw us back into ourselves. Being that it is solely dependent on your will and accessible at any time, it is the most common method of practicing presence. When you're in any state other than relaxation, you tend to take shallower breaths. Deliberately changing your breathing rhythm allows you to focus inwardly and instantly decelerate your hurried pace.

2. Concentrate on one sense.

We are multi-sensory beings, but that can often result in overstimulation. When you have the opportunity, focus on just one of your senses. Close your eyes while you listen to sounds in the background. When you're eating, try to distinguish among the flavors in a bite. Sit in silence while you examine a particular object. Creating spaces with limited sensory input can help you find more calm.

3. Stop multi-tasking.

Most people are not the efficient multi-taskers they claim to be. Performing several activities at one time often results in a lack of concentration, leading to decreased productivity or increased errors. For example, grocery shopping while talking on the phone can have you aimlessly wandering down aisles. If you're speaking to a friend, just do that. If you're shopping in a grocery store, just do that. It may not be feasible for every shopping trip, but make the decision to be present with one task when you can.

4. Establish tech-free times.

Today's technology makes us accessible at all times if we let it. However, this takes away our power over our own time. Designate periods when you're simply not accessible. Barring essential people, things such as random email notifications, texts, and work updates probably don't need your 24/7 attention. Make non-contact time sacred.

5. Learn to say no to things that don't bring you joy.

Think of all the activities in which you engage yourself. Is there one you'd rather not do that you could eliminate? When you don't enjoy something, it not only takes up your time when you're doing it; you waste valuable energy anticipating your displeasure. Dreading something in the future forces you out of the present. Say no when you want to.

6. Practice listening and eye contact.

These are the basics of communication. These actions let the other party know you are present for *them*. They feel heard and validated, which means your presence has the potential to set off a chain-reaction. (Remember, your mindfulness reaches far beyond your own world.)

Practicing presence isn't a fad. It's a timeless principle of well-being. It's essential to meaningful connection with self and others. Don't miss the moment. It may be too important to ignore.

