



Stepping into the Present Is a Gift , by Carolyn Hobbs

Most of us have heard of ego and let ego run our lives without realizing it. But few of us know how deeply our ego—the small, less mature, defensive part of us that reacts personally to every little thing—sabotages us by resisting the present. Whether it speaks loud and demanding or soft and seductive, our ego exhausts itself convincing us that we have much more important things to worry about and plan and do than waste our time in the silly, boring present. But underneath all this bravado, ego treats the present like a life-threatening plague.

Ego's job in life is keeping us safe at all costs. As safety manager, it takes this job very seriously. It can't help itself. But in its near-sightedness, it cannot decipher between fear and reality. If it convinces itself that our lover might possibly hurt us, ego does everything in its power to destroy our relationship. Ego rallies all its loyal soldiers—fear, worry, doubt, judgment and despair—to pull off its latest heist.

Remember, safety (not happiness or love) is ego's single goal. It pulls out all the stops when helping us avoid possible hurt, discomfort, illness, suffering or pain—especially a broken heart. All day long, ego crams our head with incessant thoughts, memories, fantasies, fears, regrets, plans, worries, hopelessness—anything to distract us. We might say ego has a phobia about the present.

Besides grandma's wedding ring and dad's gold watch, we also inherited an unquestioned loyalty to ego's shenanigans. When it labels our current experience as "good" or "bad," we buy its judgment. When it devotes hours to analyzing past hurts in a futile attempt to avoid future hurts, we swallow its conclusions whole. When ego captivates us with juicy stories about my thoughts, my feelings, my wants—knowing how susceptible we are to stories about ourselves—we ride the big wave.

Ego does all this below our awareness, counting on our ignorance.

Now is the time to question our undying loyalty to one small part of who we are. One scratch below the surface reveals how ego acts and thinks like a five-year-old. It hides under the bed at the whiff of any unfamiliar, unpredictable, unexpected things that might cause discomfort, creating more suffering for us in its wake.

If our goal is freedom and joy, we need to see through ego's clever antics.

Some deep excavating is in order. Ego mastered its games centuries ago and fine-tunes it every time it captures our attention. First, we need to replace ego's false kingpin, "If you just get it right next time, you'll never have to feel hurt, disappointed, scared or rejected again" with the truth: "Suffering comes with life." We smile and nod at ego's compelling stories and, instead, hear our trusting heart whisper softly, "You're safe to feel the fear or doubt directly and let it go." [...]

We can't stop fear or judgment. Ego's thoughts arrive before we have time to think about them. But we can consciously choose how to respond. Stepping into the present is a gift we can give ourselves anytime, anywhere, any moment. Presence, our inner compass, navigates our choices toward inner peace and freedom.

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