

# Live Today as if it's Tomorrow

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*"A day merely survived is no cause for celebration. You are not here to fritter away your precious hours when you have the ability to accomplish so much by making a slight change in your routine. No more busy work. No more hiding from success. Leave time, leave space, to grow. Now. Now! Not tomorrow!"*

- Og Mandino

How do you begin your day? Do you wake up to the amazing new possibilities that await you? Or do you have your own version of "Groundhog Day," where each day is a tired replay of the day before?

Our brains love to work on routine. Habit and repetition do a couple of things for us. First, they allow us to be comfortable; we love the certainty of knowing what to expect and being successful at doing a task. The other thing that repetition does for us is to use less mental capacity to do the task at hand. Remember the first time you drove a car or rode a bike? It took every ounce of concentration and ability you had, just to get by and hopefully not crash! Over time, as your brain and body became familiar with the task, it took less effort and so you could relax, think about other things, and still be "successful." The thought of crashing doesn't even enter your mind, now that you've become good at the task. Psychologists estimate that 80% to 90% of our daily behavior is based on habit. What we think, what we do, and what we observe today is based on what we've thought, done, and observed in the past.



Although habit and repetition help us function in our busy, complex lives, they also limit us. Because it's so easy to do the same things over and over, the natural tendency is for inertia. This is Newton's 1<sup>st</sup> Law: the "tendency of a body to resist acceleration." Inertia is also resistance or disinclination to motion, action, or change. Does that sound like you in the morning?! When you think about creating a change in your life, do you tell yourself that it isn't possible to create the change you want? Or that it would just be too "hard" to make changes? And if you do think those things, how long have you been thinking them? Could those thoughts and feelings to resist change are just part of your habitual pattern? Are those thoughts part of how you continue to live today as if it were yesterday?

The good news is that it doesn't take much at all to begin to change your pattern of living today as if it were yesterday. Yes, it won't happen overnight. But it also won't be as "hard" as you think. There are three key steps to living today as if it is tomorrow.

First, identify some specific difference you'd like to create between yesterday and tomorrow. For example, if you'd like to be more healthy in the future, identify the differences between the thoughts and behaviors, even the smallest differences, between your past patterns and the ones that would support being more healthy. Something as simple as shifting your identity from a "procrastinator" to "a healthy, fit person" can make a difference. Make a list of those differences. What would be different about how you think? What would be different about how you act? What would be different about what you observe? What would be different about how you feel? Are there a few of these that would be pretty easy to do? Highlight those on your list.

Once the list is made, the second step is to create intentional shifts in thinking, behaving, observing, and feeling. This is where you break the pattern of inertia, and create a new cycle of habit and routine. When you start breaking the pattern with simple, easy changes, the "resistance" of inertia isn't so great. For example, in our being "healthy" example, a pattern shift of changing your identity and making two new choices a day can be very simple. Yet that simple change begins to teach your mind and body to adapt to more change. Returning to our metaphor of driving a car, it's easy to steer the car gently to the right or left, even when traveling at high speed. However, if you're traveling down the road and suddenly try to reverse or make a U turn, you're in for trouble. When you consistently but gently steer a particular direction you will ultimately be going in a different direction without risking a crash. The same is true of the process of living today as if it's tomorrow.

The last step is to condition these changes with repetition until they become the new habit, which then sets you up to handle another set of changes. Conditioning requires repetition and consistency. We know that children and pets learn new behaviors by constant and consistent reminders of old behaviors to eliminate, as well as the new desired behaviors. We all learn that way. When you fall into your old patterns, gently remind yourself of the



commitment you've made to the new patterns. Even more importantly, when you make the new desired changes in your patterns, celebrate your achievement! Give yourself positive, enthusiastic reinforcement because that is what will ultimately help you sustain the change. To help condition the new patterns, post notes around your house and office as reminders, put new behaviors in your calendar so you remember to take action, find an accountability partner, repeat your new patterns and commitment to yourself every day, do anything and everything that creates an environment to encourage and support your changes. Every day that you take some action to live today as if it's tomorrow, brings that vision of tomorrow closer.

An example of how this made a difference in my life was when I completed an exercise called "My Ideal Day." For this exercise, I described how my life would be if I were living my ideal day. There were huge differences between how I was living my life at the time, and how my ideal day would be. However, I made incremental changes as I was able, and realized approximately one year later that I was living my ideal day! It hadn't happened with any one choice or action; rather it was the culmination of many smaller choices and actions. I would never have reached that ideal day if I had continued to live each day as if it were yesterday. By making the choice to live each day as if it was tomorrow (my ideal day), I very quickly created the future I wanted.

Make a choice about how you want to live. Will you live today as if it were yesterday, so you can expect the same results? Or will you make a choice to live today as if it is tomorrow, and create new results in your life? Remember that living today as if it's tomorrow doesn't have to be hard