



It's all about the present

Often, as a child, our overriding expectation during the festive season revolved around what we were likely to receive - a mixture of excited anticipation and a sinking dread depending on the relative and whether all the hints we had carefully been dropping over the past weeks and months had been understood. Then the big day would come, and it would be make or break. Either elation or disappointment rules here. Woe betides if a sibling should triumph instead of us. At that age for many, it is all about the present.





We look back at such times with the eyes of an adult and smile at our own distress. How was it we became upset? Then we reconnect to the emotion of that moment, feel it once more in our body and it's real again. Time has shrunk and it's as if we are back there.

We rarely admit what it is we really want. Somehow life or the universe or even our partner has to guess successfully and present it to us. If we are not careful we live a life of cryptic messages about what we most want, not only for others to discover but also for ourselves. How often do we travel down this same path, each day let alone each year?

So what makes a great gift?

It is a wonderful feeling when we receive a gift that is both particular to us, and is in some way personally meaningful. It gives the feeling that our wants and needs have been heard and that someone has thought about us and listened to us.

So if that feels so good, why do we resist it so much of our lives? Why do we choose not to listen to the most important person, our-self. This is not the selfish activity it first would seem; it is an act of personal responsibility. If we are not prepared to be responsible for how we feel, our reactions and needs then why should anyone else listen?





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There's no excuse not to give ourselves the gift we really need, the gift of being heard. When we truly listen to ourselves we begin to connect to how we actually are. Then we have the opportunity to release away from those parts of our lives driven by resistance and pushing where we struggle to keep our story going constructing a life rather than living it.

Where do we find this gift? If we look for it purposefully we often can't. At these times we need to softly listen to ourselves. Not in a way that distracts us from our lives but in a way that listens for when we start to push and resist. It's a sure sign that we're trying to make the present different to how it is. The simplest approach is also one of the most effective; smiling; not the effusiveness of the proverbial Cheshire cat, but more like the Mona Lisa.

So in this festive season, whatever comes your way check into the way things are by noticing how your face feels. Is it tense and pinched, or are you softly smiling? Releasing the tension in your face tunes you into your body immediately and brightens your mind. Then take a three-breath breathing space:

With your first breath scan your body for any sense of tension, tightness or resistance particularly inside your head around your brain, soften and smile into this, not to get rid of it but to release the mind's reaction to it. It turns our wanting or not wanting into acceptance.

The second breath connects you with your breath. Just watch this with patience and softness.

With the third breath expand your awareness to all of your body starting with the soles of your feet and working upward.

This acceptance of our present moment experience brings clarity around the real choices we have and helps cultivate a deep and compassionate awareness to assess where we are, and where we wish to be in line with our deepest values.

By owning how we feel right now, we take responsibility for the choices we make in the next moments: not what someone has chosen for us, but what we have chosen for ourselves. In a very real sense, at this, and any age, it's all about the present.

When you have a little more time, try this extended breathing space. It lasts about 6 minutes and is available free to Yoga Magazine readers on my website. Follow this link: <http://bit.ly/1gGK4wo>

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