

media personalities, speak quickly and loudly. We interrupt each other and rarely take time to listen. Our media experiences are often violent, suspense-ridden, and filled with high drama in fast cuts. Our hearts are beating loudly; we must be alive.

We focus on anything but the present. Hiking up a mountain we think, “Won’t it be great to get a real view!” Then, after hours of struggle, we finally make the summit. The view spreads out before us; we look . . . and then we leave. That’s it. We’re unpracticed in letting the moment reverberate, in taking in the experience.

Our heavily mediated, commercialized environment, which relies on our dissatisfaction for its productivity engine, has, in a very real sense, deadened us to life itself. Whatever we have, more would be better. We’re always waiting for the exciting moment when things are really real. What we do or have in the present is but a pale, thin version of the wonderful things we could do or have in the future. So we never quite feel alive.

Feeling Alive, Period

The key to cultivating vitality, the felt experience of life, is the simple cliché, Be Here Now. It centers on Attention. As we attend more fully, we find, as Eckhart Tolle says, “a genuine sense of aliveness.”¹⁵ We become one with life.

As we practice attention to our experience, we find the vitality inherent in all of it. What’s happening right here, right now is deep, rich, and nuanced, even though the commercial culture might poohpoo it as not exciting, productive, or future-oriented. In our simple, still presence we are intensely alive.

We no longer wait for future satisfaction; we find it now, in every moment. The drama and angst of the media stories are less compelling; we feel a stronger pull to be simply who we are. Negativity is not our default mode; we see all sides of the situation. When we attend to our felt experience, vitality is no longer conditional. It is available to us always. We expand our capacity for satisfaction, joy, and peace, we feel alive. Period.