

At a rough estimate, I would think that perhaps 99 out of a 100 people would benefit by being more present in their lives. This estimate would vary as some would benefit more than others, but I think it's generally a good idea to be more present in our lives. I certainly encourage my clients to do so and also people in my social circles.

However, as is the case with many things we often take a good thing and attempt to turn into a panacea. In spiritual circles, the idea of being more in the present is frequently touted as the end of suffering. It's a rather naïve and erroneous assumption which often says more about the persons gullibility than anything else. This was highlighted again in my mind when I was reading a book on a person who suffers from short term memory loss.

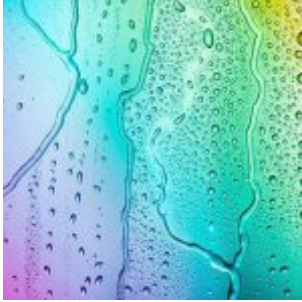
There are cases throughout history where individuals have lost short term memory capacity. The book describes such a case where the individual in question cannot remember what occurred a few seconds previously. He has no problem recalling events in long term memory, e.g., memories from a year ago. As best as scientist's can tell in cases like this, the ability to reason, intellect etc. remain intact.

The effect of his condition is that he functionally is in a state of living in the present moment on a continual basis. If we were to believe the common meme around present moment awareness, he should be living in a state of bliss. Similar cases should also be in a perpetual state of bliss. As you may have guessed, this is not the case. The person in question has great difficulty in life and experiences suffering. This is understandable given the severity of the condition.

Fortunately, most of us do not suffer from this condition and as stated earlier can benefit from being more present in life. That the practice of being more present will solve all of life's problems is highly questionable.

Buddha said it best when he advocated for the middle way. A good rule to follow is to achieve a balance in life. I sometimes recommend to people to list the benefits of being more present in life. I also get them to make a list of the benefits when we are not present. For example, a fantasy about the future may lead to a plan which sets life in a different and more beneficial direction. Sifting through our past and seeing how the past influences us also can have many benefits and allow us to learn from our mistakes. What usually gets people into trouble is if they become too extreme and that's what people should be wary of.

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