

I'd like you to take a moment to think about all the things in this life that you will experience for the last time; of course there will come a day when you will die and then everything will have been done for the last time, but long before that day you will cease to have certain experiences, experiences that you surely take for granted now.

If you're a parent, when is the last time you will pick up your child or tuck her into bed or read her a bedtime story. My youngest daughter still says 'lellow' instead of yellow and I'm not correcting her because each one of those is priceless.

Now thinking in this way, lends a poignancy to everything, even the things that you don't like. Again let's say you're a new parent and you're getting woken up several times a night by your new baby, that's brutal! But there *will* be a last time and knowing that can change your experience in the moment. There's something sweet even about this experience, and it's possible that you will miss it. We do everything a finite number of times and yet we tend to take even the most beautiful moments for granted and the rest of the time we're just trying to get through stuff, you're just trying to get to the end of whatever experience you're having.

When I was researching for a CLIMB assignment about plotting our life story, I came across the work of Tim Urban who published a poster which represents 90 years of life in weeks, each line has 52 squares and they're 90 lines. The scale is frankly a little alarming; to contemplate each week as a significant piece of 90 years and you can put your finger on the current week in your life you can see where you are and then of course you realise you have no assurance of how many weeks you have left, assuming that you have 90 years, certainly 90 good years, is generally not a safe assumption. What you can know, is that each time you do something pleasant or unpleasant that is one last time you'll do it, and there will come a time when you'll have done something for the final time and you will rarely know when that is.

For instance, I used to love to play rugby and I haven't played rugby for well over a decade, will I ever play Rugby again? I've no idea, but I can assure you the last time I took off my boots I was not even remotely aware of the possibility that it might be the last time. Now, I might live for many more years and yet this stood a good chance of being the last time I would ever play.

When's the last time you swam in the ocean or went ice skating? When was the last time you took a walk just to take a walk? As you go about your day to day, consider everything you're doing, everything represents a finite opportunity to savour your life on some level, everything is precious and if it doesn't seem that way, I think you'll find that paying more attention can make it seem that way.

Attention really is your true source of wealth, even more than time, because you can waste time, being distracted. So, this is just to urge you to take a little more care. When you meet someone for the first time and you shake their hand, pay a little more attention, when you thank somebody for something, mean it a little more, connect with your life. Mindfulness is the tool that allows you to do that.

Your attention is always bound up in something; we largely become what we pay attention to. We are building our minds in every moment, we are building habits and desires, worries and expectations, prejudices and insights. Mindfulness is just the ability to notice this process with clarity and then prioritise what you pay attention to. Why not pay attention to those things that make you a better person why not free your attention from all of the trivial things that are clamouring for it.

Let's say you pick up your phone to check an e-mail and at that moment your five-year-old daughter starts telling you a story. Now you could be so lost in your thoughts about your e-mail, and you could find the urge to respond to it so compelling that you don't even notice that your daughter is talking to you. Or you could notice, only to rebuff her in a way that makes her feel terrible and you'll be so entranced that 5 minutes later you wouldn't even recall that this episode occurred. That's how most people live their lives. In fact, that's how most of us live most of our lives.

The more you're mindful of your attitude towards life, the more degrees of freedom you'll find in situations like this. You can notice for instance that your daughter is trying to get your attention and that giving her your attention is in competition with this urge to check your e-mail. When you begin to acknowledge this urge your attitude can break the line between the feeling and the behavioural imperative it seems to communicate.

It's true that one way to get rid of this feeling is to check your e-mail but another is just simply let go of it and only mindfulness allows you to do the latter. Then you can direct your attention to the five-year-old who is standing in front of you. It might be the only story she tells you that day and you can be aware of this fact

in that moment, and you can feel the poignancy of it. In that moment you can further ingrain this new habit, you can become the kind of person who is fully present in moments like that. You become that kind of person not just for yourself, by changing your attitude, but in this case for your daughter, by changing her perception of you and of her surroundings.

This is just a 30 second slice of life, there are literally hundreds even thousands of moments like this throughout the day. These are choice points that wouldn't otherwise exist. These are paths taken and not taken, for good reason, but without free attention there's no place for good reasons to land. As you grow in mindfulness you begin to notice the lies you can no longer tell, and you begin to have insights into your true motives in various situations. Sometimes these are not flattering but you want these insights all the same because how else did you become a better person. That is what it is to live and examined life. So don't pay attention just because it's good for you, it's more important than that.