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ONE WOMAN'S VOICE

FEBRUARY IS THE CRUELEST MONTH, OR SMALL ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT YOU BEING FULLY PRESENT

I think that T.S. Elliot had it wrong when he famously said that “April is the cruelest month” as the opening to his poem, *The Wasteland*, written in 1922 for the poet Ezra Pound. I personally find February to be the cruelest month of the year, with its short, dark and brutally cold days here in the Northern Hemisphere where I live, when winter has marched on long enough to leave me wondering if spring is even possible again or if it is only a distant dream I’d had during a time when life felt a little less challenged by global pandemic, economic uncertainty and questionable leadership that has many people living close to the edges of survival. February challenges my patience every year, but this year, it feels even more challenging as we approach the one-year mark of the COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant upending of our daily lives. When I look into the face of February, I remember what meditation and training have taught me across decades: That the only way through the challenge, as cliché as it may be, is to go one step at a time and to stay as present to the moment that I am in right now, to bring myself fully to the moment at hand, moment by moment until the month delivers its blessings and lessons, possibilities and small graces.

So, in the spirit of bringing ourselves to full presence in the moment, I share with you some suggestions that I wrote for myself years ago. I refer to this list often to reorient myself when I’m spending too much time in the past or the future, and I always find one small action I can take in the moment to bring myself more fully back to myself right now. This is my short list, but one that I hope will offer you at least a few actions to help you move through February’s challenges and blessings both. If this list speaks to you and you’d like to keep it with you, you can download a PDF of it by clicking [RIGHT HERE](#).

SMALL, DAILY ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT YOU BEING FULLY PRESENT

1. Put your phone down. Or your laptop, tablet, Kindle, device. Regulate your use.
2. Walk outside as much as you can. Exercise. Move your body.
3. Pray every morning upon waking, or focus on your breath. Before you get out of bed.
4. Limit alcohol intake. Or go for none at all for 7, 14, 21 or 28 days.
5. No mindless snacking. Eat real food and actual meals at least twice a day.
6. Listen to Gregorian Chant music, or Classical or Dudek or whatever calms your breath.
7. Light a candle or multiple candles. Every day.
8. Stretch your body. Every day.
9. Stretch every part of you, a little bit. Every day.

10. Ask for help *before* you need it.
11. Accept the help that is extended to you when it comes. Every time.
12. Ask for signs to guide you. Every day.
13. Accept signs that are extended to you. Every day.
14. Listen. Just listen.
15. Look at the sky. Every day.
16. Meditate. Or focus on your breathing for 5 minutes. Every day. Calm your self.
17. Write daily Gratitude Lists. 5 things each day that you are grateful for. Every Day.
18. If an issue, experience or feeling keeps circling back in your mind or your heart that is causing you to feel unsettled or troubled, allow yourself 3 to 5 minutes to write out how you are feeling. Then burn what you have written.
19. Look people in the eye. At least one person, in the eye, every day.
20. Fast for 16 hours a day. Or for 12 hours. Let your body renew itself.
21. Don't eat after 7:22pm each evening. Pick a time that feels good to you. 7:22pm is my time, and not eating after that time helps me to sleep better and to feel better when I wake the next morning.
22. Focus while you are working, writing, eating, meditating, stretching, creating, loving. Focus fully on what you are doing or being in the moment.
23. Look around you. Identify 3 things you can see, 2 things you can hear, 1 thing you can feel, 1 thing you can smell, 1 flavor you can taste, or remember tasting earlier in the day. I can still taste the peppermint tea I had this afternoon. Identifying our sense in the moment bring us back to the moment that we are in.
24. Say THANK YOU. Out loud. Every day.
25. Pay attention. Come back to this moment. Now. Right now.

**YOUR LIFE IS RIGHT NOW.
Even with its challenges and uncertainties, its blessings and graces,
your life is happening right now.**

COME TO IT, AND TO YOURSELF, FULLY. FOR ALL OF IT.

ALL PEACE TO EACH ONE OF YOU. DORA

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