

[IMAGE]

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Finding Balance Between Life and Living

By Rebecca J. Razo

Wow! Summertime again. Sure, it's an old cliché, but I'm truly amazed at how fast time flies -- and the busier we are, the faster it seems to go.

Like most people, I'm constantly on the run. Between juggling a full-time job, family, a part-time school schedule and everything in between, I rarely have time to myself, let alone time to actually stop and appreciate the beauty of life that surrounds me everyday. I live a mile from the beautiful Southern California coastline, but I think I've only taken a walk there once in the last year. Sometimes, I can smell the salty sea air from my porch and it makes me keenly aware of what I'm missing, especially during this time of year, when daylight stretches into early evening.

My family and I often talk about relocating to a less populated area someday: We dream of a country house on a little parcel of land; I dream of lounging on a hammock in the afternoon with nothing but the sound of the wind and birds weaving through the trees. So, when everyday life stresses me out and I start asking if it's "all worth it," my husband reminds me of what we are working toward: a country house, land, and a hammock.

But are we be putting too much emphasis on the future? Perhaps. Lately, in the midst of this chaotic life -- or what we at home have dubbed "working toward our future" -- I've been thinking that I might be missing a significant part of the journey, which makes me wonder if I'm gambling too much today on a tomorrow I may never see.

As a massage therapist, you spend a lot of time caring for others, which takes a considerable amount of physical and mental energy. At the end of the day, you probably find yourself tapped out, with not much left over for yourself. In between clients, you are taking continuing education classes, marketing your practice, and constantly trying to find ways to stay competitive in this rapidly growing profession. Many of you have families and go to school; some of you have second -- or even third -- jobs. Your days blur together and

before you know it, a month has passed, then two, then a year, and so on.

Stop for a moment and reflect on the last six months. How much of that time did you spend appreciating your journey? If your answer -- like mine -- was "not much," you're not alone; you've been sucked into that powerful current. But now it's time to change that pattern and commit to living more fully in the present. I'm not suggesting you stop planning for your future, just try to keep things in perspective; plans change, but you can never recapture those precious moments of the past, be it last year, yesterday or 45 minutes ago.

Furthermore, our plans rarely turn out like we want or expect them to. Your appreciation of the here and now will lead to a much happier existence than would rushing through life in pursuit of a future that has yet to transpire -- and missing most of life's real adventures along the way.

Take some time this summer to re-evaluate the way you spend your time. Do you rush from place to place without stopping to appreciate the beauty and mystery of each day? Do you find yourself saying, "We'll get together soon" to friends knowing that "soon" may never come, or saying "not tonight" when your kids want to go out for ice cream? I did (and sometimes I still do). But I'm learning to realize the value in the "little" things we so often dismiss because "there's no time." These are the moments that color the canvasses of our lives, and the more we learn to appreciate every moment of every day without thinking about life "down the line," the more colorful our painting will be.

Have a wonderful summer!

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