

# TINY WISDOM ON MINDFULNESS



**Simple Tips for Living in the Now**

by Lori Deschene  
Founder of Tiny Buddha

# **Tiny Wisdom: On Mindfulness**

## **Simple Tips for Living in the Now**

by Lori Deschene

Founder of [tinybuddha.com](http://tinybuddha.com)

Cover and book design by Joshua Denney, [thinkwebstrategy.com](http://thinkwebstrategy.com)

Copyright © 2015 by Lori Deschene

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

# **Table of Contents**

**Introduction**

**This Moment Is a Chance to Be Free**

**Just Breathe**

**Realizing You Are Already Complete**

**Cling Less, Enjoy More**

**The Illusion of Tomorrow**

**Choose to Be Here**

**The Same, But Different**

**The Greatest Adventure Is Now**

**Keep Your Head Clear**

**Making Peace with Time**

**Let Go of the Stress of Rushing**

**What It Means to Be Free**

**What We Pay Attention To**

**If You Knew This Would Be Your Last Day**

**Stillness in a World That Moves Quickly**

**Take This Moment and Start Anew**

**We Can Choose Right Now**

**Open Your Eyes and See**

**We Get to Decide If Today Counts**

**Somewhere Right Now**

**About Tiny Buddha**

**About the Author**

**Get More Tiny Buddha**

# Introduction

Sometimes it can feel like the present moment is passing us by.

We can get caught up dwelling on yesterday and worrying about tomorrow, as if these are productive things to do—as if we're somehow creating solutions to our problems, or thinking our way into happier circumstances.

The irony is that this instinct is one of our greatest problems; it gives us the illusion of control while consuming all the energy we could otherwise use to experience what's in front of us.

If we're not mindful, we can spend our whole lives scheming to really live, only to eventually realize we never got the chance.

We have to *choose* to really live, one moment at a time.

Most of us understand this intellectually. We know that life is happening now, and that eventually, our time will run out.

We know that the people we love won't be here forever, and that this is our opportunity to appreciate and enjoy them.

We also know that our little stresses don't really matter in the grand scheme of things.

Still, it's easy to forget these truths when we feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or scared. No matter how much knowledge we acquire, we may still struggle to apply it. It's part of being human.

This is why I started [tinybuddha.com](http://tinybuddha.com) as a community blog in the fall of 2009: so we could share our stories and experiences and help remind each other to really be here, to make this moment count.



Over the past six years, I've published posts from more than 1,200 writers, and I've written hundreds of tiny posts sharing my own experiences and lessons.

What follows is a short collection of my tiny pieces on mindfulness.

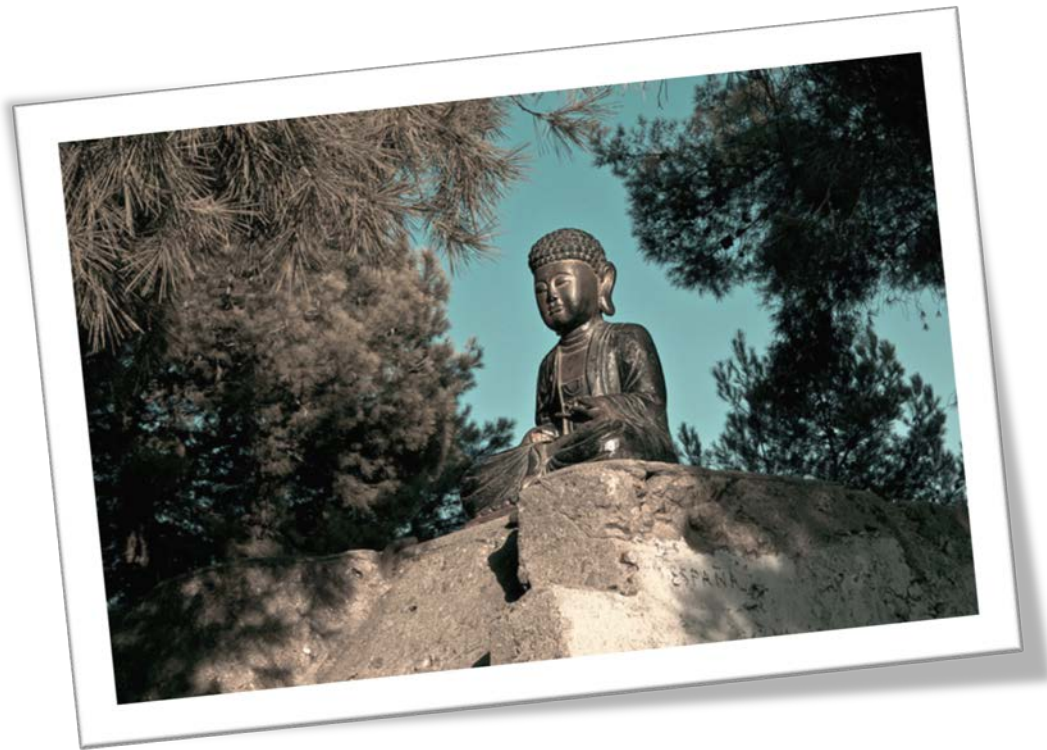
You can read them all at once, start your morning reflecting on one, or take some time in the afternoon to ground yourself in the moment.

What matters is that you create a little time, every day, to practice being present.

If you're anything like me, you just might find the little things make the biggest difference.



# **This Moment Is a Chance to Be Free**



**“Dwelling on the negative simply contributes to its power.”**

**~Shirley MacLaine**

Have you ever felt like you were drowning in negativity?

Maybe you were feeling down on yourself, but instead of pulling yourself up, you made yourself feel bad for struggling in this way.

Or maybe you made a mistake, but instead of forgiving yourself, you beat yourself up over it, rehashing everything you should have done.



It's all too easy to get stuck in a cycle of negativity. Even if we practice yoga, meditate, or start our mornings with positive affirmations, we can fall down and find ourselves wondering why it feels so hard to get back up.

I spent most of my life in this type of cycle, and though I've made tremendous progress over the years, I still fall into this trap sometimes.

When this happens, I might be tempted to think myself in circles—to essentially let my feelings paralyze me while I dwell on the same fears and frustrations over and over again. And then I might wonder why I feel so stuck.

The truth is we feel paralyzed when we paralyze ourselves, and we can set ourselves free if we stop obsessing about why we can't.

We don't need to identify concrete solutions to all our problems. We don't need to create the illusion of control amid uncertain circumstances. We just need to accept that our biggest problem is fighting the way things are, and then consciously choose to stop battling ourselves.

We just have to choose to be in this moment instead of scheming toward something better.

This moment is a new opportunity to let go of everything that's stressing us.

This moment is a new chance to take a deep breath so that we don't feel so overwhelmed and frustrated.

This moment is a tiny lifetime, all in itself, and we have the choice to live it.

We can trudge through mental quicksand, feeling bad and wishing we didn't; or we can realize that stewing isn't even slightly productive, and then consciously choose to let go and be free.

*Photo by [Alex \[Fino\] LA](#)*



# Just Breathe



**“Our way to practice is one step at a time, one breath at a time.”**

**~Shunryu Suzuki**

When I was younger I frequently had mini panic attacks and feared that I might suffocate. It literally felt difficult to catch my breath; it almost felt like I was being smothered.

When I felt this type of anxiety, people often told me, “Just breathe.” But that was the problem—it didn’t feel like I could. The missing piece of their advice was *how*.

When we’re feeling frustrated, panicked, stressed, or scared, we tend to breathe rapid, shallow breaths, allowing minimal air to our lungs.





This can actually lead to a number of physical problems, including dizziness, headaches, chronic fatigue, heart palpitations, headaches, high blood pressure, and numbness.

So on top of the difficult emotions we may experience, we then create short-term and long-term physical problems by reducing the amount of oxygen that gets to our brains.

The alternative: Take deep, slow, mindful breaths through the nose. Then hold the breath briefly before exhaling for twice as long as the inhalation.

Not only does this help us release tension and reduce anxiety, it also provides a solid internal focus to help ground us when we may feel overwhelmed by external circumstances.

*That's* what it means to just breathe: to *just* breathe. To concentrate solely on the experience of nourishing our bodies with air, and, in doing so, foster a deep sense of internal safety.

This reminds us that no matter how catastrophic things may seem, we're alive. We're okay. We'll get through it. We are still here, still strong, still breathing.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, just breathe. Forget for a minute about everything that needs to be done and take it all one slow step and deep breath at a time.

If you're feeling worried, just breathe. Forget for a minute about everything that might go wrong and create what can go right, one slow step and deep breath at a time.

If you're feeling scared, just breathe. Forget for a minute about everything that might hurt you and take care of yourself, one slow step and deep breath at a time.

Oftentimes the world inside our heads is far more chaotic than the world outside it. We have immense power to calm it by remembering to just breathe.

*Photo by [brewbooks](#)*



# Realizing You're Already Complete



**“On a deeper level you are already complete. When you realize that, there is a playful, joyous energy behind what you do.”**

**~Eckhart Tolle**

In [\*The Power of Now\*](#), Eckhart Tolle explores how people attach their happiness to achievements in the future. A perfect relationship. A promotion. A salary increase.

Since all of these things exist somewhere other than now—and they're all impermanent, even if you do achieve them—this thinking creates pain on multiple levels.

First, in the present, when you've yet to achieve what you think you need. Next, in the acquisition, when you realize that, even though you've met your goal, you're still wired to



look for happiness somewhere in the future. And later, when life changes, and you no longer have exactly what you had.

Life *always* changes. Nothing is permanent.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't pursue goals. It's just that we'd experience a deeper sense of joy on the journey if we realized there's nowhere to get to. There's no *someday when I'm someone*, or *someday when I'm happy*. There's no salvation in the future. It's an illusion that strips the present of joy and makes it a stressful experience.

Life is now. It will always be now. At some point we have to decide *now* is a perfect time to be happy, peaceful, satisfied, and complete.

As you work toward your goals today, tune into your underlying motivations and ask yourself: Am I focusing all my energy on a happy tomorrow to the detriment of today?

Photo by [jamiehladky](#)



# Cling Less, Enjoy More



**“Most of our troubles are due to our passionate desire for and attachment to things that we misapprehend as enduring entities.” ~Dalai Lama**

My boyfriend and I recently spent a couple of days in Las Vegas. These days I get excited about the buffets and shows, but formerly, I found the city a little depressing.

First, I felt sad for the people who seemed a little lost, either for having lost vast quantities of money or for having lost a part of themselves (something I know all too well).

Secondly, I felt the inevitable crash that follows overstimulation and excess of any kind.

But there was more to it than that. When I first went to Vegas years back, I felt like I was standing smack dab in the middle of a lifestyle I couldn't afford. Amid the sea of tight designer dresses, in my cheap, modest clothes, I feared I looked out of place.

I also found the luxurious ambiance of most casinos stressful. Every time I passed a majestic fountain, or a fancy velvet couch, or a store full of lavish spa items, I thought about how simple my own apartment was. I couldn't simply enjoy my surroundings because I was too busy wishing I could own it all.

During one trip, though, something occurred to me: The world is full of beauty I can take in, regardless of what I have—but I will never be able to appreciate it if I'm too busy trying to hold onto it.

This isn't only true of all that glitters. It's true of all the sights, sounds, and moments we may want to bottle and carry with us forever.

We can't fully appreciate a picturesque sunset if we're wishing it would never rain again.

We can't fully enjoy a moment of true connection if we're wishing we'd never feel alone again.

We can't fully savor a relaxing day if we're wishing we'd never be busy again.

Maybe the key to happiness is to focus less on making moments last and more on making them count.

We do that by choosing to fully experience them instead of wishing they wouldn't end.

It's human nature to wonder if we'd be happier with more. Perhaps the key is to work with that instinct and realize we can have more joyful experiences if we're willing to cling to less.

*Photo by [maira.gall](https://www.instagram.com/maira.gall)*



# The Illusion of Tomorrow



**“There is more to life than increasing its speed.” ~Gandhi**

If only tomorrow were here.

You’d have that promotion you feel you’ve earned. Your bank account would have an extra zero or two. You’d be finished with the improvements on your house, and ready for new ones to make it even more comfortable.

Your kids would be in that school you can’t yet afford—closer to graduation, closer to adulthood, closer to leaving your home.

You could plan that vacation you've wanted to take. And take it. And come back. And want for another.

If only tomorrow were here.

You'd be one day too late to enjoy today's sunset.

Twenty-four hours too late to savor today's lunch, today's cool breeze, today's little lessons.

One night too late to tell someone you love them—someone who could move, or change, or even fade away.

Smack dab in the middle of another today, when everything is still imperfect, and yet still so beautiful.

Tomorrow will come, and tomorrow will go. Take a deep breath and enjoy right now. This is what is real.

*Photo by [lostintheredwoods](#)*



# Choose to Be Here



**“Stress is caused by being ‘here’ but wanting to be ‘there.’”**

**~Eckhart Tolle**

There is little in life that is more stressful than thinking you need be somewhere else but feeling powerless to get there.

There’s this dream I used to have over and over again. I’d want to get somewhere, but my body wouldn’t move. I’d start running, but I would essentially be jogging in place, like Wile Coyote when he was pushed off a cliff but he’d continue moving his legs while suspended in mid-air.

No matter how much energy I expelled, I was immobile; but I always kept fighting, sweating, and screaming, hoping something or someone would save me from the pain of my paralysis.





That's how I lived my life. There was always something I visualized as the end-all-be-all in terms of happiness, and it was always something that evaded me—a relationship, a job, an adventure, and usually underneath it all a feeling I desperately wanted.

It was always something just out of reach until I got it, and my internal supervisor gave me a new assignment to target my aching, endless want. There was no reward for achieving; just a new demand to cower before.

I've realized there will always be the possibility of a tomorrow that could be better than today. There's always going to be a *there* that sounds like a fantasy—someday when you've gotten what you want.

You could easily wrap your whole life around the promise of getting there and tie your emotions to the illusion of getting closer. You could stress out if you don't think you're making progress or feel frustrated that you haven't seen enough results.

You could complain to people about feeling stuck and dwell on how much better things would be if only you could get there.

You *could* do all of that—if you want to choose unhappiness. Because this moment, right now, is life. And where we are is where we have an opportunity to be happy.

We can fight it and feel stressed, or let go and feel peace.

That doesn't mean we can't strive for things we want. It just means we've realized the path to a bright tomorrow starts with a choice to recognize and create light today.

Dig your heels in and ground yourself in the present. You are here, and this is all that's guaranteed. What's good about this moment, and how can you appreciate and enjoy it?

Photo by [Viewoftheworld](#)



# The Same, But Different



**“What you do today is important, because you are exchanging a day of your life for it.” ~Unknown**

My boyfriend, who is an aspiring screenwriter, has told me that the film industry and moviegoers essentially want “the same, but different.”

We want the same themes, but with different people; the same humor, but in different circumstances. We want to see good rewarded, and for love to conquer all; we want the hero to change for the better, and the villain to reap what he sows.

We want action, excitement, adventure, and romance. We want to feel terrified and then relieved; we want to doubt and then believe.

We want to see people fall and survive—struggle and thrive. We want to feel the full spectrum of emotions, from low to high. We want to be moved, inspired, and maybe even, in some small way, changed.

In the real world there are no happy endings, since we're perpetually in the middle—and often, there's gravity where filmmakers would insert levity, and unfairness where they would create justice.

Still, this is all very similar to life: From one day to the next, it's often the same, but different. We experience fears, insecurities, and emotions that we've known and felt for years. We deal with challenges that seem so familiar they may even seem like a part of us. We might make mistakes we've made many times before. We might come against the same resistance we've been battling all our lives. We may repeat the same patterns in relationships that we've known since we were young. And we may find ourselves receiving guidance that seems like nothing new.

Yet it's always new. It's always different. Even if the days are similar, we come to each one totally new people.

We come to our struggles with new insights. We come to each other with new understanding. And we come to each moment with new potential to be that hero—to make a different choice, to change for the better.

Sometimes it can seem like nothing ever changes and nothing ever will. But everything changes, in tiny shifts, every day. The real question is whether or not we'll recognize the tiny shifts within us and act on what we feel.

Regardless of our circumstances, we always have a choice. We can choose more of the same; or we can recognize this moment is different—and that we can be, too.

*Photo by [malfet](#)*



# The Greatest Adventure Is Now



## “The journey is the reward.” ~Chinese Proverb

So much of our language about the things we enjoy in life revolves around getting ahead.

We wonder where our relationships are going. We plan to move forward in our careers. We talk about maintaining momentum with new projects.

None of these things are necessarily bad. We naturally crave growth to feel a sense of purpose and progress.

But sometimes we put so much energy into pushing and striving that we miss out on the joy of being where we are.



When we visualize ourselves taking a pause to fully absorb and appreciate our surroundings, it's often after we've arrived. It's when we've climbed the mountain and can finally stand proudly on its peak. It's when we've made the commitment, secured the deal, or finished working on something we love.

From a purely mathematic standpoint, it's clear we will have far fewer opportunities to enjoy arriving than we will have to enjoy the journey.

The question then becomes: Are we willing to relish in the many uncertain moments when we're not sure yet where our efforts are leading?

I suspect it boils down to belief and intention.

If we believe we need to create massive change in order to experience joy, we will inevitably feel a sense of restlessness. This moment will feel like something we need to endure to get ahead—something painfully inadequate compared to where we'd rather be.

If we believe that every part of the process can be beautiful and joyful, we will feel a sense of calmness and peace. This moment will feel like something we need to savor while it lasts—something unique and worth celebrating, regardless of where it takes us.

We're always going to want to spread our wings and fly. We crave freedom, adventure, and possibility, and we don't want to feel stuck, bored, or limited.

Perhaps happiness is recognizing that we are never stuck. Even if we don't recognize it, we are always growing and evolving, and the world we know is always changing.

There will never be another opportunity to seize the possibilities of this moment. We can limit ourselves by failing to recognize this, and in doing so, let life pass us by. Or we can realize the greatest adventure is always the one we're in right now.

*Photo by [scion cho](#)*



# Keep Your Head Clear



**“Keep your head clear. It doesn’t matter how bright the path is if your head is always cloudy.” ~Unknown**

Some days seem to start with a proverbial rain cloud dripping above our beds.

I had one of those days recently. I didn’t sleep well the two nights prior, so I woke up that day feeling irritable and grouchy.

My boyfriend’s voice sounded like nails down a chalkboard. To be clear, I love him dearly, and I also love the sound of birds chirping. But in that moment, I wished I had a mute button because everything annoyed me.

I argued with him over something silly and then felt horrible. Despite my honest apology, I felt unhappy with myself and resistant to doing anything.

But doing nothing was not an option, so I pushed myself. I started our laundry, opened my computer, and then pulled out my to-do list.

Right then I realized: That was not the energy I ever want to bring to my work. Since I was feeling off-balanced and moody, the only option was to stop. To do nothing. To take a break, take a breath, and give myself space to create a better state of mind.

Sometimes it feels like there's no time for this. We have responsibilities, people depending on us, things that need to get done. It can be tempting to just plow through, even if we're not in a great headspace—after all, we don't want to compromise our productivity.

The irony, though, is that taking five to ten minutes for a short walk or some grounding breaths can make a profound difference in our efficiency.

We do everything more effectively when we come to it from a place of calmness—which means making time to take care of ourselves can actually be the best thing for our work and our goals.

But more importantly, taking time to clear our heads is a kind thing to do, for ourselves and other people. We live up there all day, every day, and whether we realize it or not, our thinking affects everyone around us.

Make composure a priority today. Take the time you need. You deserve it—and so do your work and your relationships.

*Photo by [Wonderlane](#)*



# Making Peace with Time



**“Every day brings a choice: to practice stress or to practice peace.” ~Joan Borysenko**

The other day, as I approached a street to get to a nearby coffee shop, I noticed there were only five seconds left on the walk signal. Instinctively, I ran. With a laptop. And a purse. In the heat. And why?



If I missed the walk signal, there would be another one in a little over a minute. The president wasn't waiting on me with lattes getting cold. And there wasn't a baby in the middle of the road who needed rescuing.

It was like some type of Pavlovian response to the ticking countdown. I saw it, and I decided to accept the challenge of making it (which I did).

Ridiculous though this admission may be, I've noticed that lots of us struggle to beat the clock when it's completely unnecessary.

We speed up to make green lights, even though it would be far less stressful to just wait for the next one.

We try to squeeze additional tasks into small unexpected windows of time, instead of simply appreciating the extra ten minutes that result when someone's late to a meeting.

We set ourselves up to struggle with time even though there's no rational reason to do it. It's far more useful to save the energy it takes to rush than it is to save two minutes. It's much more productive to recharge during unexpected downtime than to scurry to get things done.

It's just that sometimes we forget that saving time and filling it are not the same as using it well.

Today, if you find yourself rushing and cramming activities into your minutes, remember: It's a lot easier to live in the moment when you choose not to make the moment stressful.

*Photo by [Lara604](#)*



# Let Go of the Stress of Rushing



**“Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.” ~Will Rogers**

It was like a scene in a movie. I was waiting to cross the street while pedestrians were crossing the perpendicular one. A number of cars were piled up, with drivers waiting to turn when the people made it to the sidewalk.

Several impatient drivers honked, as if they didn't understand why the first one wasn't going. So that first guy stuck his head out his window and yelled at the pedestrians, “Come on—hurry up!”

Then one of them yelled back, “I'm &%\*#ing pregnant, %\$\*hole. So shut up!” (No swearing here—Tiny Buddha is a family friendly place!)



She *was* pregnant—visibly. This means that first driver either didn't actually look at her, or knowingly yelled at a pregnant woman because people behind him were applying pressure.

This got me thinking about an accident I read about many years ago. Several cars were stopped. A woman behind them couldn't see why, so she sped into the left lane to pass them, fatally injuring a third grader who was crossing the street.

Both situations boil down to urgency—that need to keep moving, and quickly. This not only fills us with anxiety and compromises our judgment, it also affects everyone us.

It can cause us to be careless in ways that directly impact others, and it creates an environment of tension that creates stress for everyone within it.

It's when the person serving customers feels the need to run because he can sense people in line are getting impatient (or worse, he's responding to criticism from them).

It's when you don't really hear what someone's saying to you because you're too busy thinking about what you want to get done—not later, but *right now*, instead of having to listen.

We might gain five minutes we could otherwise have lost. We might get a sense of accomplishment for finishing one extra item on the to-do list. We might feel a sense of control instead of having to stand still and feel stuck or unproductive.

But we might also lose our peace, our composure, and opportunities to really connect with other people.

Wherever we are, this is life—it's happening right now. Do we really want to rush through it?

Photo by [j/f/photos](https://www.pexels.com/photo/white-tree-branch-against-white-background-1000000000/)



# What It Means to Be Free



**“Freedom is the will to be responsible to ourselves.” ~Friedrich Nietzsche**

When you choose to forgive instead of seeing the world through bitter eyes, you are free.

When learn from your mistakes instead of letting them define or cripple you, you are free.

When you love yourself regardless of what other people think, you are free.

When you accept uncertainty instead of stressing about what you don't know, you are free.

When you embrace chaos, instead of struggling for control, you are free.

When you recognize that we are all imperfect, and then resist the urge to fight that, you are free.



When you choose to appreciate what you have instead of lamenting what you've lost, you are free.

When you plant yourself in this moment, and do what you can to make the most of it, you are free.

*Photo by [Permanently Scatterbrained](#)*



# What We Pay Attention To



**“Tell me to what you pay attention and I will tell you who you are.” ~Jose Ortega y Gasset**

Have you ever suddenly stopped yourself after realizing you’d been dwelling on something insignificant for way too long?

Maybe it was something that didn’t go right in your day, or something mildly offensive that someone said. Whatever it was, it was something you knew wasn’t a big deal in the grand scheme of things, and yet you felt a need to mentally rehash it over and over in your head.

I've done this many times before. Though I know it's draining and not even slightly productive, it sometimes it seems like a proactive way to "fix" or "solve" something that somehow felt wrong.

I suspect it's also a means to reinforce to myself that I am right and didn't deserve to be slighted, because rehashing a perceived offense is essentially passing judgment over and over again.

A while back I realized that every time I give power to the little things that might seem bothersome—when a stranger flips me off on the road, or someone doesn't return my email right away—I am choosing to *be* that unproductive, anxious energy.

Every time I get caught up in my need to feel liked and respected, and my indignation over feeling that I'm not, I am choosing to *be* the fear of being mistreated. Thinking isn't just an activity—it manifests as a state of being. As the Buddha said, what we think, we become.

Now, I'm not suggesting we should swallow our feelings on events big and small in fear they may somehow define us.

I'm suggesting that we question the thoughts that create our feelings so that we don't let them consume us—especially when we're creating drama and unease over something we may not even remember in a few days' time.

We spend so much of our time focusing our attention on things that don't really serve us, when the thing that would serve us the most is to focus our attention inward.

If we can observe and understand how our thoughts are impacting us, we can change who we're being and how we're experiencing the world.

It starts with a simple realization: We can feel free and present—and be open, here in this moment—if we choose to release the little worries that stand in the way of that.

Photo by [Dave B.](#)



# If You Knew This Would Be Your Last Day



**“Happiness consists of living each day as if it were the first day of your honeymoon and the last day of your vacation.” ~Leo Tolstoy**

If you knew this would be your last day, would you waste time worrying about everything you might not finish on your to-do list?

Would you spend today dwelling on that minor disappointment?

Would you hold a grudge about that fight or misunderstanding?

Would you hesitate to tell the people you love just how much you care?



Would you be hard on yourself for your mistakes, imperfections, or struggles?

If you knew this would be your last day, would you make amends, or make a change, or make a point, or make a difference? Would you do something, or say something that you've been waiting to do or say?

Would you look at something you always see with a new sense of appreciation?

Would you listen to people with a stronger focus, taking in every last word?

Would you say yes to what you really want and no to what you don't?

Would you give yourself every opportunity to enjoy the people and things you love?

Take a deep breath, close your eyes, and then see this day anew. Wipe the slate clean. Take the pressure off. Put a smile on. Today is a new opportunity to be who you want to be and do what you want to do.

*Photo by [emdote](#)*



# Stillness in a World That Moves Quickly



**“Within you there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself.” ~Hermann Hesse**

Before I started [tinybuddha.com](http://tinybuddha.com), I had a different blog where I frequently posted uplifting videos. I quickly learned that the average web reader will devote one to two minutes before deciding that a video drags on. It’s a consequence of the rapidly moving digital era: Our attention spans have decreased.

And we tend to get desensitized to concepts fairly quickly. Perhaps it’s because very little feels fresh in an information-overloaded online world, where there are millions of inspiring quotes, beautiful images, and poignant videos to enjoy.

When something is sticky—the term internet marketers use describe a page that people look at for longer than average—there’s often a highly strategic, psychologically motivated plan that keeps us enthralled and engaging.

There *are* things that captivate and touch us—and they oftentimes go viral. But they may be videos we watch half-way through before sharing. Or blog posts we briefly scan and then stumble.

That’s not to say we always hop from content to content with all the focus of an overstimulated goldfish. It’s just that, on the whole, as an audience, we’re hard to captivate. There’s a lot happening around us, online and off, and a lot competing for our attention.

I thought about all this today, after watching a [time lapse video](#) I found linked on Twitter. Shot in San Francisco, it shows hundreds of hours of footage in just under five minutes. And it’s beautiful. It’s a condensed slice of everything we might miss, when we’re caught up on our heads, or multitasking, or receiving various stimuli with multiple senses simultaneously.

Only two minutes in and I was already tempted to do something else. Then I realized the irony.

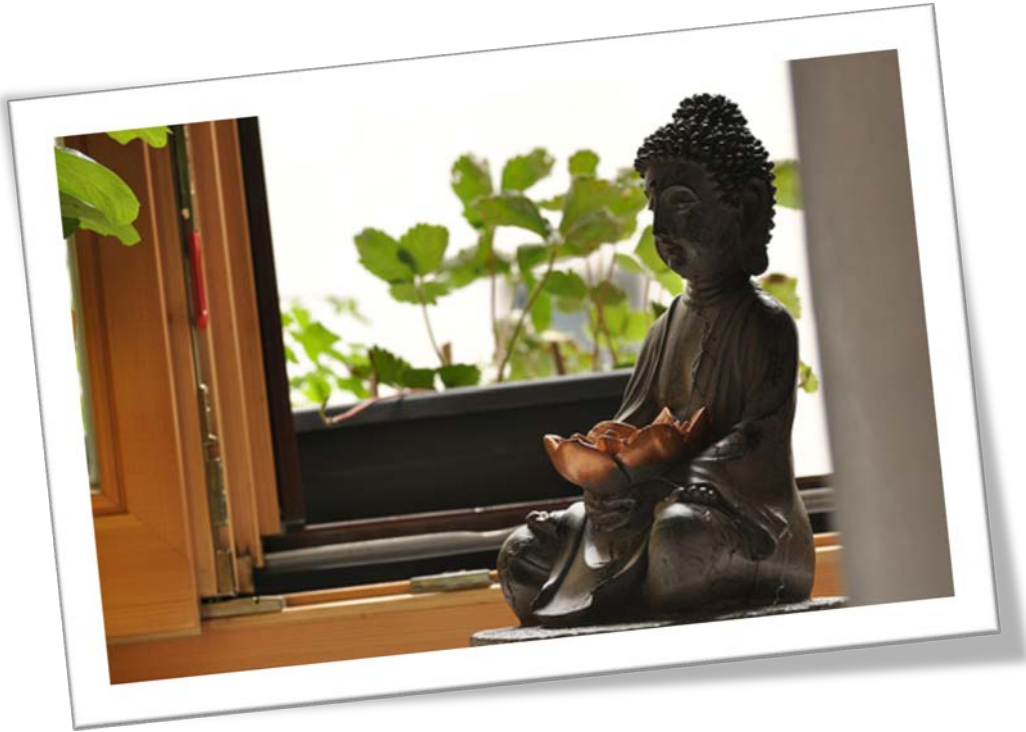
Life moves quickly around us. There will always be something else to see and do. There will always be something else that pops up and threatens to scatter our focus. We can task the outside world with being sticky enough to engage us. Or we can choose to find serenity and focus, sitting smack dab in the middle of the chaos.

Life is beauty in motion, but we can only appreciate it one tiny piece at a time—and only if we’re willing to find stillness within.

*Photo by [secretlondon123](#)*



# Take This Moment and Start Anew



**“Many fine things can be done in a day if you don’t always make that day tomorrow.” ~Unknown**

When I was younger, an adult I was staying with told me, “The diet starts tomorrow. Let’s eat everything we can before midnight.”

So we did. We ate grilled cheeses, leftover Chinese food, Twinkies, and anything else that called to us from her cabinets.

It was then or never, that was the message, and tomorrow would be different—which of course it wasn’t.

For years, I started each morning intending to make healthy choices, and then, after failing to meet my perfectionist standards, decided to turn over a new leaf the following day.



I justified chain smoking by telling myself I'd quit tomorrow. I allowed myself to remain inert by rationalizing that the day was "ruined" because I missed my morning workout.

It was impossible to make big change because I always had an excuse to avoid making different choices.

I eventually gave up Marlboros and binging, but I still deal with all-or-nothing thinking at times, particularly when it comes to leaving my comfort zone—and if I'm not careful, it can be paralyzing.

Perhaps you can relate. Maybe you've rationalized that you'll start dieting after the holidays instead of cutting back just a little starting now. Or maybe you've put off looking for more fulfilling work, assuming it would be easier next week, next month, or next year, when you feel less frustrated or overwhelmed.

We delude ourselves when we rationalize that tomorrow we'll excel at what we aren't willing to start today. We may never feel fully prepared or confident when it comes to our ability to change—and that's okay, so long as we're willing to try, starting now.

That means accepting we may not do things perfectly.

We may feel like we're making progress and then fear we're right where we started. More likely, we will have taken two steps forward and one step back—which means we *are* moving forward.

I don't believe that life is short; most of us will have abundant opportunities to experience all this world has to offer. Whether or not we actually do that is largely dependent on how we spend our time.

We can sabotage our days by imagining tomorrow will be better; or we can seize our moments by forgiving ourselves when we struggle and doing the best we can right now.

*Photo by [zedmelody](#)*



# We Can Choose Right Now



**“You are your choices.” ~Seneca**

It sounds like such a cliché to say that most of what we’re seeking is already within us, but nonetheless, it’s true.

Happiness doesn’t only exist in some perfect tomorrow when our circumstances look ideal. It’s a moment-to-moment choice that has to do with how we perceive and respond to what’s in front of us. We can choose happiness right now.

Peace doesn't only exist in some time without obstacles or troubles. It's something we can feel by accepting what is, doing our best, and believing that's good enough. We can choose peace right now.

Love doesn't only exist in a storybook relationship with the perfect person. It's something we can nurture within ourselves in any moment and then share with the people and the world around us. We can choose love right now.

Success doesn't only exist in epic achievement, some day down the road. It's what we feel when we honor the things that matter to us instead of making excuses why we can't. We can choose success right now.

We can choose what we think. We can choose what we believe. We can choose how we react. We can choose how we act.

This moment is all there is—and while we can't control everything about it, we can choose who we are and what we do within it.

What do you choose right now?

*Photo by [memsahib 313](#)*



# Open Your Eyes and See



**“If you worry about what might be, and wonder what might have been, you will ignore what is.” ~Unknown**

The other day, I devoted an extensive amount of time to writing something I've been struggling to complete. I wrote and rewrote so many times that it felt like more like destruction than creation, but I've come to realize that chaos is often the path to clarity.

There were times when I knew it could be beneficial to do something else, clear my head, and come back to it with fresh eyes, but a part of me felt this drive to push through and finish.





While eating dinner with my brother that night, I recognized I wasn't really listening to anything he was saying. I was still thinking about my unfinished project, and somewhat sucking the joy out of it with my perfectionism. But I knew I'd be leaving the state to return home soon, so I was wasting precious time.

Then everything went dark. The power went out on the entire street, and it stayed that way for more than two hours. Suddenly it was futile to think about writing because I simply couldn't.

All I could do was see my brother, by candlelight, and be there, in empty space with him. Sitting in the darkness, playing Twenty Questions, and surrendering to the now, I felt free.

If you're anything like me, you probably have good intentions of being present—and there are times when you are. But other times, you struggle with your mind and a nagging need for control. Mindfulness is not an easy proposition. Unwanted thoughts can easily sneak in and snowball before you realize the grip they have on you.

Sometimes we need to create our own blackouts—to imagine how we'd experience the moment if we literally couldn't do anything about the problems we haven't solved yet, or the memories we haven't released yet, or the battles we haven't prepared for yet.

Most of the time, we can't. We just don't want to accept it.

Any isolated moment can seem so insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but we don't get to know when the moments will run out. *Every* moment is precious time. Open your eyes and see.

*Photo by [zeze57 the Tourist](#)*



# **We Get to Decide if Today Counts**



**“The future is completely open, and we are writing it moment to moment.” ~Pema Chodron**

A while back, a reader commented that it’s easy for me to suggest tomorrow is full of possibilities since I am relatively young. An older woman, she believed her options were far more limited, and that even if she *could* do the things she wanted to do, they wouldn’t count—not at her age.

My first instinct was to start a conversation about mindfulness, since no one is ever guaranteed more than the present. Even young people don’t know for certain that they have decades more to live, so all we can ever really do is use this moment well.

But then I thought about her comment about the future not counting.



I interpreted this to mean she couldn't enjoy the rest of her days because she felt they would somehow be defined by the "wasted" ones that had passed—like a smile wouldn't be as joyful as it could be because there were fewer than she wanted before it, or helping someone wouldn't be as meaningful as it could be because it wouldn't contribute to a lifelong legacy.

It seemed like she felt that life had passed her by, even though it was still going.

I could relate to that feeling. I've wasted many days worrying about the days I thought I wasted. It's a vicious cycle, and it only stops when we decide to use the present to the best of our ability.

If we worry about everything we wish we did, or could do with our lives, we will miss out on the opportunity to really live them—right here and right now.

Regardless of our age, we all have two things in common: We get to decide whether or not we think this moment matters; and we get to decide what exactly it means to make it count.

The present is completely open, and we are living it, right now. What do you want to make of it?

*Photo by [Two Roses](#)*



# Somewhere Right Now



**“Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it.” ~Eckhart Tolle**

Somewhere right now, someone out there feels exactly like you do.

Someone is thinking that things could be better and wondering if they'll ever arrive. Someone is remembering how things were before and wondering if they'll ever let go. Someone is missing someone they love and wondering why they had to know loss. Someone is radiating with hope and joy and wondering if it will last.

Somewhere right now, someone is struggling in much the same way as you.

Someone is out of work and cash and wondering what might be next. Someone is waiting for an important call and wondering if it's best not to know. Someone is walking away from



no good and wondering if they can go on. Someone is walking toward something new and wondering if they should turn back.

Somewhere right now, someone is transforming in much the same way as you.

Someone is stretching into a new role and wondering if it feels right. Someone is reaching for a new goal and wondering who they can become. Someone is trying their hardest to create change and wondering if they're making strides. Someone is getting ready to take a leap and wondering if they'll feel more alive.

Despite all our differences, we all deal with the same things, in different times and different ways.

We're all striving and struggling, learning and growing, and sometimes it can feel like we should be somewhere else—like we should be smarter, wiser, further along, or closer to having an answer.

But right now in the middle, in the messiness and uncertainty, this is where we all live.

No one has it all figured out—and maybe that's the point. When we're finished, *we're finished*. Is that really a choice we'd make?

Somewhere right now, someone is deciding it's okay to be right where they are.

Take a deep breath, look around, and let that person be you.

Photo by [robocdh](#)



# About Tiny Buddha



Tiny Buddha is about reflecting on simple wisdom and learning new ways to apply it to our complex lives—complete with responsibilities, struggles, dreams, and relationships. Since 2009, [tinybuddha.com](http://tinybuddha.com) has emerged as a leading resource for peace and happiness, with more than 52 million views to date.

The site features tips and authentic stories from readers of all ages all over the globe. You'll find posts about happiness, motivation, inspiration, love, relationships, meaning, possibilities, mindfulness, and letting go.

Much of it has its roots in Buddhism, but it's not a site about religion. It's about ideas that make sense and make a big difference when applied.

I invite you to get involved in the site by commenting or [submitting a post to the blog](#). We're a really welcoming community! It's a lot easier to be who you want to be in this world when you remember you are never alone. We are all in this together—and we all have something to teach and something to learn.



# About the Author



My name is Lori Deschene, and I'm the founder of Tiny Buddha. I grew up in Massachusetts, where I learned early on to push myself in an attempt to prove my worth. I began working two jobs at twelve years old, while maintaining my status as an honor roll student and spending nights rehearsing for community theater performances. So packed was my schedule that a friend predicted, in my high school year book class prophecy, that I'd eventually write and star in a one-woman show about my life called "Stress."

Though I've yet to pen that script, I've learned a lot about managing stress since I left my hometown in 2002. Since then, I've traveled all over the US for work, lived in multiple states, recovered from a decade-plus battle with bulimia, healed from major depression, learned to embrace my emotional sensitivity, and built a career that suits my introverted nature and allows me to leverage my painful past for good.

I'm the author of [\*Tiny Buddha: Simple Wisdom for Life's Hard Questions\*](#), [\*Tiny Buddha's Guide to Loving Yourself\*](#), and [\*Tiny Buddha's 365 Tiny Love Challenges\*](#). I'm also co-founder of the popular online course [\*Recreate Your Life Story: Change the Script and Be the Hero\*](#). Though I live in Los Angeles, I consider myself a citizen of the world and frequently explore it with my fiancé, Ehren.



# Get More Tiny Buddha

## Social Media

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Google +](#)

## Subscribe to the Blog

[Get free daily emails or a weekly digest](#)

## Blog Categories

[Happiness & Fun](#)

[Meaning & Passion](#)

[Change & Challenges](#)

[Love & Relationships](#)

[Mindfulness & Peace](#)

[Letting Go](#)

[Healthy Habits](#)

[Work Fulfillment](#)

## Get Insight and Advice

[Join the community forums](#)





# Get Tiny Buddha's 365 Tiny Love Challenges

Many of us know that meaningful connections are the foundation of a happy life, but that doesn't necessarily make it any easier to create and sustain fulfilling, mutually beneficial relationships.

It's hard to find people we click with and turn surface level interactions, online or offline, into something deeper.

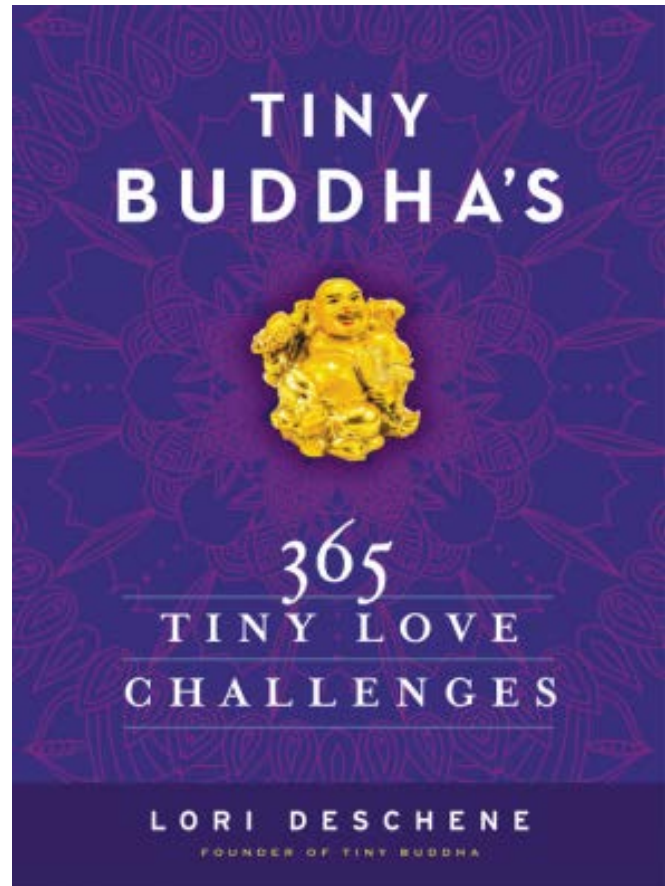
It's hard to be forgiving, accepting, and understanding when we're dealing with imperfect people, just like us, who may also struggle with these things.

It's hard to find time to be there for others when we're running from place to place, trying to get things done, and possibly struggling to make ends meet.

And it's hard to be fully present when we find the time, since we're often overwhelmed by a swarm of thoughts, fears, and worries about the past and the future.

It's a lot easier, though, when we make the effort to work on these things regularly—and even the tiniest effort can make a big difference.

Not sure where to start? [Tiny Buddha's 365 Tiny Love Challenges](#) can help.



Including more than 70 stories from Tiny Buddha contributors on kindness, forgiveness, and more, the book offers a year of simple daily activities to help you give and receive more love.

Each day suggests one simple thing you can do to love yourself or others in action, such as:

*Write a list of three things you appreciate about yourself and place it somewhere in your home where you'll frequently see it throughout the day.*

*Compliment someone who serves you in some way (for example, a waiter, barista, or bus driver) on how well they do their job.*

*Keep an eye out for someone who looks sad—a friend, coworker, or even stranger—and say something that might make them laugh or smile.*

If you commit to working on these things daily, the challenges will help you:

- Develop closer bonds in your relationships
- Let your guard down more easily to let people in
- Express your feelings instead of hiding them
- Let go of anger, bitterness, and fear
- See the best in the people around you
- Relate to and better understand your loved ones
- Let go of insecurity so you can relax in your interactions
- Turn strangers into friends
- Attract healthier relationships—and believe that you deserve them

With monthly themes to help you focus on different aspects of relationships, *Tiny Buddha's 365 Tiny Love Challenges* can help you feel more connected—to yourself, to the people around you, and to the world at large—one tiny action at a time.

You can [get \*Tiny Buddha's 365 Tiny Love Challenges\*, or pre-order before October 6, 2015, here.](#)

