

News & Announcements

Preparing for Exams

Is it too early to be thinking about exams? We don't think so. Successful planning for exams begins early in the semester. Make a plan to get your best score on every test this year. Here are some quick **tips for exam prep success:**

- ▶ Set goals
- ▶ Attend all classes
- ▶ Take notes; ask questions in class
- ▶ Review your notes
- ▶ Organize & stay organized
- ▶ Do your homework every night
- ▶ Ask for help when you need it
- ▶ Set aside time to review past notes
- ▶ Look ahead to upcoming topics
- ▶ Summarize your notes orally or in writing
- ▶ Memorize & recite facts
- ▶ Make up quizzes for yourself
- ▶ Schedule in extra study time before exams
- ▶ Build confidence in your ability to do well

STR in the Community

If you are interested in hosting a talk by Smart Tutor Referrals, please contact us.

30 - 45 minute talks for peer tutors are offered free of charge as a community service.

Tutors Available

Although quite a number of our tutors already have full schedules, we still have a good range of tutors available for this term. With over 50 tutors in total, STR is able to find the best tutor match for each student. Please contact us for more information.

Secret Study Skills – The Power of Present Moment Awareness

by Dahlia Miller

“The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it.”

Henry David Thoreau (1817 - 1862)

How many times have you been sitting in class as the teacher was talking, and suddenly realized that you haven't been listening?

Although you've been sitting there, eyes and ears open the whole time, you don't have a clue why the teacher is talking about the Middle Ages when the last you heard she was talking about the Pythagorean Theorem. Chances are you were caught up in thought – focused on something that had happened to you in the past or might (or ought to) happen in the future. Who was listening through your ears while you were busy?

Or, have you ever sat down to write a quiz or exam and suddenly felt your mind go blank? The exam in front of you brings up memories of past exams or visions of your doomed future, and you end up lost in thought or fear, not putting your best effort into the exam. Who is sitting in the exam holding your pencil while you are off in fantasy?

Teachers take attendance at the start of class to see who is present and who is absent. They're just counting bodies, though; they're not counting minds and awareness. How many times have you been present in class, but had your mind wander off? This is not real presence. And if it's not presence, it's absence.

As you know, the students who are absent from class miss the class. Guess what? The students whose minds are not present in the class also miss the class.

What are you missing when you are not present?

If you are not present, (if you're not paying attention right here and now), where are you? Chances are that you're caught up in thinking about the past or the future.

What's that saying? “The past is history. The future is a mystery. The present is a gift.”

How is the present “a gift”? We have the gift of life right now. Right now is the only time that we actually are alive. Think about it. When you remember what you did yesterday, are you actually living yesterday's events? Obviously not. When you are thinking about something that might happen next week, or even in one hour, are you actually living those events? Again, obviously not. To live your future fantasy (assuming things go exactly as planned in your mind), you're still going to have to wait for time to catch up to your future so that it is 'now' before you can live it. (But if you haven't practiced paying attention to your life right now, how can you expect to get the most out of your imagined future? You'll probably be 'absent' for that too, if absence is your habit.)

Right now is when we live our lives. Right now is when we can make choices about what we are doing and what happens in our lives. Even if things seem really boring and familiar, 'now' is still the only time that we can actually be present in our lives and make any needed changes. Otherwise it's like there is a robot living our lives, using our eyes, using our ears, sitting in class, taking our exams for us, but not really living.

Most people want to make the most of their time – living, experiencing, getting excited about ideas, building things, making changes and contributions in our world, loving others. Most people wouldn't choose to miss out on their lives.

About Us

Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents through:

In-home private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs.

Stimulating workshops building skills in a practical and creative way.

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through one-on-one support that is truly individualized, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. They are carefully screened and chosen specially to match the needs and learning styles of each student.

We support families in education.

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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That said, most people get caught up in the endless thoughts that cycle through their minds – thinking this is who they really are. They get so caught up in their thoughts that they forget to pay attention to what is actually happening right in front of them.

What can happen in your life if you really live it right now?

Imagine if Da Vinci had gotten distracted by thinking about his strange family history instead of putting his creativity and talent to painting the Mona Lisa. Or if Einstein had listened to his teachers and thought about what a poor math student he was instead of developing his theories of space and time. Or if Edison had gotten caught up in what a failure he was for getting the light bulb wrong so many hundreds of times before actually inventing one that worked. Present moment awareness frees up boundless creative energy.

What can you create in your life? What impact do you want to have on the world?

When we just narrow our awareness to the present moment, our future looks after itself. If we want to have good grades, this begins with paying attention to our class work or homework.

By the way, paying attention to the present moment doesn't mean that we don't make any plans. It means that we keep our minds focused on one thing at a time rather than thinking thoughts about the 180 things that need to get done. If the one thing that we need to do is make plans, then what we focus on is making plans. Then, when that is finished, we look around to see what is happening around us and get involved with it.

It takes only a split second, to come back to 'now'; here are some suggestions for increasing present moment awareness:

- ▶ In class or while you're doing homework, if you find that you have drifted off into thought, give yourself a pat on the back (in your mind) for recognizing it. Bring your attention back to what is happening right at the moment.

- ▶ During exams, if you get caught up in fear, take a deep breath and look around you. What is actually happening? Look at the next test question and do your best to bring your best effort to completing it. (If it's too challenging, make any notes you can and move on to the next question.) Do this as many times as necessary to get you through the test.

- ▶ Be at least as interested in what is going on inside you as outside. Self-awareness is presence.

- ▶ Use your powers of observation. What can you see, hear, feel, smell right now?

- ▶ Feel yourself sitting or standing from the inside out. Can you feel the insides of your hands, your legs, your chest?

- ▶ Breathe deeply and let your belly expand with your inhalation. Feel the sensation of the air moving past your nostrils as you inhale and exhale.

- ▶ Close your eyes and listen to what is around you right now. How many different sounds can you hear? What can you smell?

- ▶ Put some things together on a table. Activate your hands, close your eyes, and pick the items up one at a time. Consider what each item feels like: its texture, its weight, its shape, and its contours.

- ▶ Practise being the 'knowing' (aware of your physical and emotional self and your surroundings). What physical sensations can you feel right now? Is there tension in your body somewhere?

- ▶ What emotional sensations can you feel right now? Emotion is the body's demonstration of your state of mind. Can you break your emotions down into what they feel like in your body rather than thinking about the (past or future) events that are likely sparking your emotional reaction? Just pay attention to what is actually happening right now.

"Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind."

Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 – 1519)