



Wellbeing Insight

Being Present: Creating the Sacred

“The trick to forgetting the big picture is to look at everything close up.” Chuck Palahniuk.

“Focus on the moment, not the monsters that may or may not be ahead.” Ryan Holiday, *The Obstacle is the Way*.

“When we move through the world aware of what is here and now, the ordinary becomes extraordinary, the mundane sacred.” Tal Ben-Shahar, *Happiness Studies*.

The wisdom of these three sages, appeals to me. This is what I make of their words when I level them up to my lived experience: The Palahniuk, as quoted in Ryan Holiday’s *The Obstacle is the Way*, has a sagacity which we can all benefit from. When we lower our eyes and invest our energies into “the one thing in front of us” (another quote, this one from Byron Katie), we do not need to overthink. There is a time for forward looking, of course, but when it comes down to action, full attention is needed ‘in the now,’ if we are to feel satisfied with our efforts. We are then able to savour the process of doing our best rather than speculating about the larger measure of what we hope to achieve in the future. The danger in the forward thinking, is immobilising ourselves here and now.

I have often drawn on the wisdom of Ryan Holiday. This quote mirrors the essence of a speech I gave to my Toastmasters club. I titled it ‘*Is it a sabretooth tiger?*’ The premise is similar to Holiday’s. In evolutionary terms, fear of leaving the cave and encountering a ferocious predator was real and proportional to the danger. In the 21st Century, there are no sabretooth tigers, but one can be forgiven for thinking, when reflecting on our response to real or imaginary monsters, that there are – around each corner. Living with this anxiety is crippling. We have a responsibility to rein ourselves in – or seek professional help if we cannot do it alone – if we are living in this way. The key to the perspective connoted in this quote is ‘may not.’ It may never happen!

Ben-Shahar’s wisdom is up-lifting. Living in the now does not have to mean accepting blandness. His suggestion is that you can transform the moment with awareness, lift it out of the ordinary to the extraordinary. Really seeing, paying attention, offers this power. Sacredness is also a perceptual notion. Rather than needing a ritual or a practice necessarily, we can create our own sacredness in the everyday. This brings to mind my quotidian list of the sacred:

The blessing of the sun on my shoulder when walking

The future within the giggle of my baby grandson

The peace experienced through the susurrations of the wind in the she-oak tree.

How wonderful to know that we have the power, in the present moment, to create our sacred.

Warm wishes, Sue