

## How to Give Yourself to Whatever the Moment Brings and Forget Stress

By Ingo Logé

The prevailing way of living in our Western societies is to plan out our lives, both for the long term and on a day-to-day basis. We have planners and digital calendars that map out our lives, sometimes to the minute. We feel we're in control, with plans like this.

But it's an illusion, as I've said before.

We cannot control our lives to this degree, no matter how hard we try. Things will always come up to spoil the best-laid plans, and the more detailed our plans the more of a guarantee that something will go wrong.

And what happens when the plans go wrong? We are stressed out, because things get out of our control and don't live up to our expectations. This is one of the greatest sources of stress for most people, actually.

Think about how often your days actually go according to plan, exactly. It's pretty rare, because we have no way of predicting the future. No matter how hard we try, there's always an email that will disrupt things, a last-minute meeting, cancellations and postponements, emergencies and fires to put out.

So if plans will almost always go wrong, and when they do we get stressed out, isn't all the time we spend creating the plans a bit of a waste?

But what's the alternative? Giving yourself to the moment. This will not work for everyone, I'll admit. There are those who will have a hard time giving up the illusion of control, and others who are controlled by their bosses or peers and cannot work or live this way. Still, it's something worth considering.

Here's how to do it — starting with the don'ts:

1. **Don't plan.** Planning is an attempt to control the world around us, but it's a futile attempt. Throw out your plans, for now at least until you've decided this method isn't for you. What do you do instead? More on this below. For now, just stop planning.
2. **Don't worry about the future.** Will something bad happen? Are there things coming up that we must anticipate and prepare for? Of course, if there's a massive hurricane headed your way, you should probably get ready. But otherwise, just realize that the future is unpredictable, and worrying about it is a waste of time. Focus on right now, and you'll always be able to handle what comes.
3. **Don't have expectations.** If you expect people to act a certain way, or hope that things will turn out a certain way, you'll always run into problems. Forget about outcomes for now. Go into things without expectations, and they will always turn out perfectly (if a bit messy).
4. **Don't get annoyed when others act a certain way.** Don't expect people to act any way other than how they actually act. They are exactly the way they should be, even if that's selfish or weird or aggressive. Those are their problems. Your problem is figuring out how you should act. I'd also advise you to try to understand others — why do they act the way they do?
5. **Don't overreact.** This is a major problem when people plan and things go wrong — they overreact, and get upset and emotional and blow things out of proportion. Stay calm, because if things "go wrong", they didn't actually go wrong, they just happened. More on how to react below.
6. **Don't try to be proactive.** This is a common prescription (being proactive) in management and business literature. And while I think the general idea is fine — do something to prevent problems from recurring rather than just fixing them after they

happen — one of the problems this creates is always worrying about what might happen. And creating solutions before there are problems: If there never is a problem, you've wasted a lot of time creating the solution, and a lot of energy worrying about the future.

And now for the dos:

1. **Do be open.** What would it be like to go into each day without a plan, but just to see what happens? A bit scary, because of the lack of security and control, a bit chaotic perhaps, a bit like we're a piece of driftwood floating in the middle of a churning sea. But in truth, this is what it's like to go into each day *\*with\** a plan — it's just that we normally fool ourselves about the amount of control we have. So start the day with no plan, and be open to what emerges in each moment.
2. **Do what you love.** So what should you do, now that you have no plan? Do what you're passionate about, do what excites you right now. Create something amazing. Pour yourself energetically into a project. Build something new. And what you think you're creating might turn out to be completely different from what emerges, but you'll have fun doing it and something even better might be revealed.
3. **Do act, in the moment.** Giving yourself to the moment doesn't mean being passive and just letting life happen. It means acting, but doing what is best at this moment, what you are excited about right now, what needs to be done, in the present.
4. **Do respond appropriately.** Life happens, and we must respond. But instead of overreacting, we can respond calmly and appropriately. We can take the action that's required, fix the problem, do what's necessary to prevent it from happening again, and move on without it ruining our day.
5. **Do accept.** Accept what happens. It might not be what you considered ideal, but it's what life has given you, what has resulted from your actions in an unpredictable world. Accept it, respond, act, move on. Don't get caught up in things not going your way, but accept that's what has happened.

Again, this way of living won't be for everybody. Some don't have the freedom to live this way, and others just won't give up control. Some will think this is a passive way of living, but it really isn't: it's just a way of living in the moment without being caught up in the future (or the past) so much.

And when we live in the moment, we're really living life to the fullest. This is the gift of the present.