**Morning Anxiety, Procrastination & the Dawn of Presence**

Until recently, I cannot remember the last time I felt that I had experienced a manageable morning. From my experience, mornings have always brought about a great deal of stress in my life and for the longest time I was completely befuddled. Why did I always wake up with a head full of chaos and an impeding sense of doom lurking over my shoulder? I always got up on the wrong side of the bed and no matter what I felt like I was showing up late to life.

Just as many other facets of my existence, I conceded that this unwelcome thought pattern was simply another faulty circuit hardwired into my brain. Many people are burdened with anxiety in the morning so in in this fashion I was correct, but what I did not realize was that I self-inflicted this phenomenon to a greater extent than most. Instead of seeing the anxiety for what it was, a feeling, I treated it as an unwelcome guest of whom I desperately persuaded to leave. By doing so I falsely validated this anxiety as a fact, and solidified its stay in my thought cycle.

**Procrastination is fear masked with an excuse**

Usually my morning anxiety populates as an ongoing list of things I have to get done by the time I rest my head to sleep at night. In the past I built up a steady routine of worrying for the majority of the day, pondering different ways that I could fail at getting everything done. I call this procrastination. At its core, I believe procrastination is simply the fear of failure whose derivatives manifest itself in countless varieties of absurd actions. Whether it was writing an essay, registering a car, studying for an exam, applying for a job, asking a girl out, grocery shopping, developing a website or making a phone call, I was great at succumbing to this fear.

I bring up procrastination because I believe it bleeds a lot further into our daily lives than just how we typically think of the word. In a sense I feel that anxiety-ridden mornings are really just an exaggerated exercise of daily procrastination. When I abstractly analyzed my daily routine I found that most of my mornings were spent anxiously fearing the rest of the day. And this fear knows no bounds in its imagination. Will I get everything done? Where do I have to be and when? How will I get there? Will the traffic be bad? What don't I want to do today and how much time am I going to spend anticipating it? What person might not like me and can I think myself into them liking me? Am I happy with myself? Will I feel this stressed later? Is there something I'm forgetting to be worry about?

**Ask yourself questions**

I didn't realize I was thinking this way for a long time. Mark Twain once said that, "my life has been filled with many tragedies, most of which never occurred." I can relate to that. I never heard myself asking these questions, but my nervous attitude and restless demeanor stood as evidence that something was going on under the hood. Every morning I was anxious about the day and every night I tossed and turned, replaying all the things I hadn't gotten done, already pre-gaming my morning terrors. This cycle continued ad infinitum. I never understood why. It wasn't until I finally asked myself one morning why I always felt nervous on awakening that I started to get answers.

I find that asking the questions is crucial in getting answers, and thus arriving at some feasible solution to the problem at hand. I would always live in this anxiety and take its baggage at face value without once questioning the reasoning behind it. It was only once I put my energy into asking why I was anxious rather than feeding the anxiety itself that I got answers. I began to start my morning routine with asking myself, "Okay David, what is actually going on up there?" As crazy as it sounds I started to write down these questions and glossed over them one by one. Putting pen to paper immediately trivialized most of these fears and stole fuel from its fire. I highly recommend doing this. One of the main themes I surmised from my anxiety is that it usually in one way or another is infused with the idea of time. From worrying about getting something done by noon or realizing that a quarter of my life was over, everything seemed to stem from this mysterious four-letter word.

**So what is time?**

I believe that time is nothing more than a measurement of life, and we as humans have an innate necessity to measure everything. Echart Tolle in the *Power of Now* uses "psychological time" and "clock time" as two labels to set a distinction between the way we allow ourselves to perceive this phenomenon. Echart describes psychological time as an, "identification with the past and continuous compulsive projection into the future," and broadly encompasses clock time by suggesting its utilized "in the practical aspects of life." I believe that I spent virtually all of my life trapped in psychological time; worrying about how I could have done better in the past and fearing that I won't succeed in the future. I would constantly harbor on the notions that its already too late to do what I want and live with a sense of impeding doom looming over my shoulder like some clock was running out. From my personal experience I found that this ticking clock is self-imposed method that I utilize to keep myself trapped fear.

In a paper published in 1997 Sudendorf and Corballis argued that,

*"we as humans are unique among the animal kingdom in being able to mentally dissociate ourselves from the present. To do so, we travel backwards and forwards in the mind's eye to remember and re-experience specify events that happened in the past (episodic memory) and to anticipate and pre experience future scenarios (future planning)."*

This stroke home particularly hard with me. We as humans are the only damn animal on the planet blessed with this exclusive ability to bend time within our minds yet we primarily use this tool to perpetuate anxiety and fear. N.S. Clayton and A. Dickinson of the University of Cambridge released another publication in 2010 extrapolating on this idea and hypothesized that this isn't a trait unique to humans. They cited birds ability to cache certain memories that would allow them to plan ahead for future food gathering. Assuming their hypothesis is correct, it is still pretty apparent that if other animals have the ability for future planning, than they experience time through what Echart describes as clock time. They don't sit there and worry about whether some other bird is going to find them unattractive in their pursuit of food, they just use their past memories to plan where they should find food for their survival.

As humans we stand alone in terms of our capacity to worry about meaningless things. I used to ponder why this was the case. Maybe it was because once we reached the top of the food chain, and we no longer had to constantly worry about external animals threatening our survival, we invented our own demons to fight. I certainly don't see dogs strolling about on 5th avenue with their tails between their legs because they can't afford Gucci or devastated that another dog doesn't give them attention. They move on with their life and don't harbor on the past. In reality I don't know why we are uniquely qualified to create our own issues, but regardless, the fact that we do is readily apparent in everyday societal life.

**Be in the presence**

So how do we reach a point where we can comfortably live with ourselves and feel that everything is okay? I believe a large part of it is due to our unnatural learnt trait encompassed with constantly comparing ourselves against each other and building expectations based on these comparisons. Theodore Roosevelt once said that, "comparison is the thief of joy." While I agree with this statement, I feel that it necessitates going a step further. Comparison can only be done between distinct entities, which implies that we are all separate. We all have an urge to build our own identity separate and better than everyone else. And building something separate infers that we are isolating from one another. Have you ever felt alone in a room full of people? That is what I am talking about. Realizing we are one, living, breathing energy labeled life allows us to be grateful for others instead of steadfastly insistent that we can be better.

When I am in the present moment I don't feel separate, alone or unloved; there is simply no room for it in the now. Everyone may have different gateways in entering the present moment. In the morning I be by sitting in a comfortable position and focusing on my breath. I allow my thoughts to pass through absent of judgment and feel my presence in this space. This how I usually meditate. At other times throughout the day when feelings of anxiety or stress creep up I take a minute and bring my attention back to the breath. Sometimes just realizing that I am not in the present brings me to the point where I can feel alive. I realize that within this life I am never alone. We are all one living, breathing machine. Even trees breathe through photosynthesis. We are just the only species that allows our mind to get in the way of life.

On awakening we as humans should have the urge to burst onto the day, grateful and eager for whatever life has in store for us. We should leave behind our unconscious dream world and welcome the conscious breath. Any fear should be tucked nicely under our covers, as the night is our ego's turn to unveil its mischievous self and pilot our thoughts. But for today we have an opportunity to live each and every moment casting aside all doubt and trepidation; to live fearlessly in the present as fear necessitates the past or future to exist. It cannot coexist with the fully conscious moment. Be in life as life is in you and know that the mechanics of our universe will align itself, as it will regardless of whether you fear it.