

Part 4: Life

Summary

Being alive means

- (a) to be you,
- (b) to be now, and
- (c) to be here.

Many examples and two exercises toward being more alive are given during the program.

Life Exercise

Think of an event in the recent past. Observe yourself reacting to this event. How did you react emotionally? What convictions and attitudes were part of your reaction? What inner voice were you responding to? Was someone else reacting for you? Be a neutral observer. Do not judge yourself. Just look. Take your time with this exercise. (Allow at least ten minutes for this exercise.)

Discussion Questions

1. Why do so few people take the time to improve the spiritual quality of their lives? What is the single most important thing you can do to improve the quality of your life? What has this program taught you about this?
2. What does it mean to say someone has died without ever having lived? How can a person be neither dead nor alive? Do you think you are one of these people? Why or why not?
3. Being alive means (a) to be you, (b) to be now, and (c) to be here. Explain what each of these means, using examples.
4. "In the measure that you are you, you are alive." Explain this; statement and then briefly de-scribe yourself.
5. Who might you be besides your-self? Are you subject to remote control? Who has been the greatest influence on you in the past? Who is the greatest influence on you now? Are these influences on you good or bad?
6. Are you controlled by voices from the past? If so, whose voices are they?
7. What do you think Jesus meant when he said you must hate your mother and father? What did Fr. de Mello say about this?
8. How can you drop the mechanical-ness in your life? What technique for this most appealed to you from this program?
9. What did you think of the man described in the program who said that when he was paralyzed he really began to live? If you were paralyzed, do you think you could ever say this? Why or why not? What does the paralyzed man have that allows him to say that?
10. Do you have time? What do you spend your time on? How could you make more time for yourself?
11. What does it mean to live only in the present? Are the past and future unreal? If so, in what ways are they unreal? How do the past and the future separate us from the present? How does this diminish the quality of life?
12. How many minutes a day do you spend in the past or in the future? How much do you daydream about the past and the future?
13. Buddha said that enlightenment consists in coming to the present. How would you explain what he said?

14. What does it mean to be here and to come to our senses? What did Fr. de Mello mean by this?
 15. The story was told during the program of an American soldier in Korea who argued all during a Thanksgiving dinner. Later he realized that he had hardly tasted the meal he had so looked forward to. Can you think of a similar experience that you have had? What is it?
 16. Fr. de Mello said, "Ideas are not life. They are excellent to guide us in life, but they are not life.... Life is found in experience." Do you agree? Why or why not?
 17. How can ideas be an obstacle to experience? Can you think of an example of this from your own life?
 18. There was a guru who said that as a result of enlightenment when he eats he eats, when he looks he looks, and when he hears he hears. Do you consider this point ironic? Do you think he meant that everyone is enlightened? Why or why not? How would you have reacted to the guru?
 19. Do you consider the exercises in this program to be a form of prayer? Why or why not?
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Exercises for Freedom

Observe Yourself

Think of an event in the recent past. Observe yourself reacting to this event. How did you react emotionally? What convictions and attitudes were part of your reaction? What inner voice were you responding to? Was someone else reacting for you? Be a neutral observer. Do not judge yourself. Just look. Take your time with this exercise. Your mechanical-ness will stop if you learn to practice this exercise frequently and successfully.

Experience Reality

At any time of the day listen to everything around you, look at everything around you, and feel the sensations of your body. This will ground you in the here. Then stay with your senses. Bring your-self to the world of the senses and of experience.