

# THE GOLD ACHIEVER

## Living in the Now

### Lesson Two

# THE OUTER LAYER OF THE MAP

## YOUR PERSONALITY TRAITS

Let's be clear here. Learning to Live the in the Now is learning to FEEL! Or more accurately it is *remembering* how to feel. This programme is about learning to feel the immediacy of life. ALL of it. Not just the good bits. The problem is that long ago you decided that this was not a safe way to live and you closed down your contact with the present moment. Developing awareness of the ways you avoid feeling your everyday experience is the first important step to living in the now. One of the biggest problems in our modern society is that we think our everyday ways of existing are normal, to be expected, are as good as it gets. They are not. When we develop mindful awareness of our immediate experience, we get back to who we were before the world got its hands on us and remember what we long ago forgot, who we really are.

In this session, we are exploring the outer layer of your map. Your personality traits. Your aim is to learn to recognise how these traits have become conditioned patterns of closure to living in the now. Your traits developed because you do not want to feel your own depths and taste life directly. Unconsciously you believe it is not safe and you would rather be safe than be happy. Eventually, your traits became ways of being that increasingly distanced you from the immediacy of life so that you gradually lost intimacy with it. This is why you feel so much dissatisfaction with yourself and your life. Is that normal? No, of course not.

The more you flee the present moment, the smaller and more isolated you become. You experience what I think of as an 'inner shrivelling'. You become dogmatic, inflexible and self-protective, and you become a victim of fear, anger, distrust, and neediness. You lose your sense of delight in life and instead of feeling full, alive, and energetic you feel depleted, empty, and dissatisfied. When you are not in the moment, you are in a reacting and avoiding mode of living. Even though you may not be aware of it, when you are acting out your habitual patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotions, most of the time your breathing becomes tight and muscles become armoured. You become tense and have negative feelings. At such times you have dropped out of the present moment and are likely to think reactively, behave poorly and make bad decisions.

# THE OUTER LAYER OF THE MAP

## WHAT THE PRESENT MOMENT FEELS LIKE

So what does the present moment feel like? Present moment awareness is experienced and recognised through your three centres. Your head centre, your heart centre, and your body centre.

**Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the head** centre when your mind is clear and spacious, and is free from clutter and busyness. You feel an unmistakable lightness of mind that feels clear, responsive and agile. Remember how your mind feels when you are on holiday, like you have left the cares of the world behind? That's it!

**Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the heart** centre when your heart is open and warm. You experience an outpouring of love for everyone and everything and there is an absence of tightness and defensiveness. When your heart is open there are no barriers or walls of protection. Remember how you feel when you look at someone you love or cuddle your pet? That's it!

**Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the body** when your body feels grounded and centred. You were gifted with life and it is your birth right to feel its immediacy, to feel the humming vibrance of your body and the exquisite joy that exists within every moment. Remember when you FELT amazing? That's it!

When these three centres are operating in the present moment you will recognise it as feeling relaxed, peaceful, and joyful. Anytime you are not feeling these things you have abandoned the present moment. (Which for most of us is most of the time!)

So, let's explore your everyday experience starting with the outer layer of your map. Your aim with this is to directly experience the ways you leave the present moment through your habitual patterns of behaving. We will do this through an inquiry exercise at the end of this lesson. But first, let's get familiar with your personality traits. Read the description of your personality traits on the next two pages. These are describing what is detailed on the outer layer of your map. Do not be discouraged if you do not recognise ALL the traits described. It often takes some time to own all aspects of yourself. Once you have read the description and had some time to digest it all move on to the inquiry exercise.

## THE OUTER LAYER: YOUR PERSONALITY & DESIRE FOR SUCCESS

As a Gold Achiever your core value is success. You believe that if you are successful then you will be happy. The ways that you ensure your success is by being a performer or a status seeker because you want to be seen as adaptable, efficient, driven and charismatic. You want to be competent, productive, charming and professional, but more importantly, you want to be good at what you do and to look good doing it. You see yourself as ambitious, competitive and career orientated and would like others to see you as a winner with all the trappings of success. Your idealised image is that you are admirable and productive. You tend to rise to the top, based half on your ability to work hard and excel and half on your charm, poise and diplomacy. Displaying confidence, professionalism and dedication that is often rewarded handsomely in the workplace, you value productivity and competence and envision making the world a more efficient place. Concerned about having prestige and status, you quickly adapt to whatever role is expected of you. You want to be seen as an exemplar of the person who has it all together and is on their way to the top.

Seeking success through appearance, you are likely to place continuous pressure on yourself to maintain an enviable image. You do this by controlling your emotions, being efficient and maintaining a focused, single-minded attitude. You are impressive in your ability to put aside your personal feelings and accomplish goals in an efficient and practical manner.

You focus attention on tasks, goals, and recognition and live by the motto 'Why do when you can overdo!' You take great pleasure in crossing tasks off your 'to do' lists after quickly finishing them. You may even write down a task on your list that you have already completed just so you can enjoy the sense of accomplishment you feel when you cross it off.

To say that you are self-confident and motivated is an understatement. Your high level of enthusiasm, self-confidence, and energy tends to rub off on everyone around you with your positive attitude often motivating others and your friends value you, seeking you out for your adaptability, charm and winning attitude. You need to be the best at whatever you do and you love the sound of applause and the accolades that are given for a job well done. A natural born performer, you do your best to be an 'all-star' at whatever you attempt. There is no second best for you and you keep trying until you reach your goal, striving for and often developing finesse.

## OUTER LAYER: YOUR PERSONALITY & AVOIDANCE OF FAILURE

As a Gold Achiever, the ways you are most likely to flee the present moment are connected with your tendencies to measure yourself by external achievement and becoming focused on your image. You may neglect your inner-child, suppressing your inner desires and emotions to become what your parents or organisation expects of you. You work so hard at achievement that you are no longer aware of your inner-voice telling you to slow down. You want others to admire you and tell you that you have done a good job.

You avoid failure, worthlessness, being second best or appearing as though you cannot accomplish what is expected of you. You can confuse your image with who you are at your core. This chronic self-deception can lead to you living a life where the ends always justify the means but leaves you with an empty or superficial emotional existence.

On the way to achieving your goals, you may repress or swallow your emotions, seeing them as speed bumps that slow you down along the way and this can cause your emotions to come up and surprise you at unexpected times.

In your drive for success, you can often be calculating and manipulative towards those around you in order to achieve your goals.

Always on the go and energized by starting new projects, you achieve a great deal but are also at risk of burning out. As soon as you reach one goal, you are on to the next. As a result, it is difficult for you to relax, to stop over-excelling and become one of the team. As you push harder and harder to complete tasks, you may even appear robot-like and ruthless because you have begun treating yourself like a machine. Because you tend to mistake what you do for who you are, you can become a human 'doing' instead of a human 'being' and become anxious and fearful that your carefully crafted image of the successful, on the go, efficient 'doer' might be unmasked as false.

Your vice is deceit. You have a tendency to be overly boastful and others can think of you as pretentious. Seeking status through approval, your attention targets performance and prestige. Hyper-focused on your audience, you adapt to the expectations of others, which can give you the appearance of being opportunistic. You want to be the very image of success where ever you are and with whatever you do, but this trying to stand out and be number one can be exhausting. You find it hard to ask for help or to pay attention to your deeper feelings, and feel like you always have to greet the world with a smile so that people will smile at you.

# EXERCISE

Congratulations, you are now ready to begin your first exercise.

- Give yourself some quiet time, have your map open in front of you and bring yourself into a state of mindful awareness with a few deep breaths.
- Choose one personality trait from the outer layer of the map it can be a 'good' trait or a 'negative' trait.
- Using the trait you have chosen, 'answer' the three inquiry questions below.
- For one, or even two or even all three of the questions you may get the answer "It doesn't." That is fine, move on to the next question.
- Avoid rushing through these questions with your thinking mind. Mindful Awareness is needed here.
  - **How does this trait create distraction and busyness? (meaning I lose contact with the feelings and immediacy of my body)**
  - **How does this trait create overthinking? (meaning my mind is cluttered and full)**
  - **How does this trait create avoidance and withdrawal? (meaning I feel closed off and unavailable.)**

**Remember, anytime your mind is not clear, your heart is not open, and your body is not grounded you are avoiding or fleeing the present moment.**

You may not always find this inquiry easy because your traits have become so normalised. Simply remain with your mindful awareness and notice whatever arises into the space of inquiry. It is important that you stay open and curious and not judge what arises. **It is also important that you do not do anything or try to change yourself.** People often think they have the change their behaviour, do things differently, nothing could be further from the truth...**there is nothing to do but simply hold the space of mindful awareness.** Spend a week or two doing this exercise **choosing a different trait each time.** Choose traits that you have noticed popping up in your day. When you choose traits that you notice in your everyday life you are learning to catch yourself in the act of fleeing or avoiding the present moment. The more you do this the faster your awareness grows, the more spontaneous and authentic you become, the more you develop a growing connection to the present moment.

Listen to the guided meditation called 'Your Traits'. It will support you with this exercise.