

How to Savor Life By [Leo Babauta](#)

‘Many people are alive but don’t touch the miracle of being alive.’ ~**Thich Nhat Hanh**

It’s still dark out and the world remains asleep as I write these words, and I’ve just finished my morning meditation.

I sip my coffee, and savor the stillness, the quietude, the space of being able to think without distractions of the Internet or others.

This *savoring* ... it’s a magical act.

Savoring is usually applied to eating good food: take a single square of dark chocolate and put it in your mouth, but don’t chew and swallow it. Let it sit there, as you savor it, noticing its earthy notes, hints of citrus, the richness of its texture as it melts in your mouth. You swallow it almost regretfully after letting it linger, fully appreciating the deliciousness of it, giving pause to think about the people who grew the beans, who roasted and grinded them and hand-crafted them into this square of joy.

But savoring food is just the start: you can savor anything, and you should. It’s wonderful. And it changes everything.

Savoring can teach you to be mindful, to stop procrastinating, to finally exercise, to eat less and more healthfully, to live life in the present, and much more.

Let’s look at how. And, as you read this, I urge you to slow down from your usual busy practice of reading quickly, and savor the reading of this article.

The Practice

The savoring of a square of dark chocolate is a great practice you can do once a day. I like to use tea, taught to me by my friend Jesse of [Samovar Tea Lounge](#), because it is so light (compared to sweet coffee drinks) that you have to really pay attention to get the most out of it.

When you savor tea, or chocolate, or a handful of berries ... you slow down. You pay close attention — the closer the attention, the more you’ll get out of the savoring. You don’t rush to the next thing, but stop and give some space to the activity. You aren’t worried about what you have to do later, you are fully enjoying the present.

This is savoring, and it takes practice. You can do it right now, wherever you are: pause and look around you and savor this very moment. Even if it doesn’t seem to be special, because let’s face it you’ve done what you’re doing a thousand times, savor it. Fully appreciate the gift you’ve been given.

This is a practice you can do several times a day — find a few rituals for savoring, like enjoying your morning tea or coffee (without sugar), or taking a bath, or reading to your child, or having a tea ritual in the mid-afternoon, or snuggling with a loved one. The more you practice, the better you'll get.

Procrastination

We procrastinate because we are uncomfortable doing something and want to do more comfortable (easier or more familiar) things instead. We don't want to write that report/article/chapter, because it's difficult, and it's easier to check emails and take care of a bunch of little tasks. It's easier to put off those dreaded tasks.

But savoring can help. Let's take writing as an example (the process is the same for anything, from cleaning your bathroom to doing taxes) ... you have something to write and you know it's important. The usual way is to say, "OK, I should write this, but first maybe I'll check to see if anything important came into my email ... and maybe my Twitter and Facebook too ... oh, what's this interesting article I found?"

When we savor, we take this task of writing, and we slow down. We give the task some space — no switching quickly to the next thing. We pay attention to it and find the enjoyable aspects of it. And actually, there are enjoyable aspects to any activity, if we slow down and pay attention. When we savor, we notice these things, and fully enjoy them. We bask in the moment of doing, and let ourselves soak in its pleasure.

So instead of switching to something else, we sit there with the writing. We notice our urge to switch and let it go — after all, we're savoring this, so we can't just switch! We think of other things we need to do, and let them go too. We're savoring here. And we just do the writing, and notice how our fingers feel as they move over the keys, and enjoy the pouring of our thoughts onto the screen, and notice our breathing, our shoulders, our jaw, our legs, our feet, as we sit and write. We know that many people are not lucky enough to be able to do something so luxurious as writing, and so we are grateful for this moment, however fleeting.

Doing the Perfect Thing Right Now

A constant source of anxiety for most people, in this day when we can do almost anything at any moment, is: "Am I doing the right thing, right now?" Should I be exercising instead? Should I be checking what else is going on, in my social networks? Are other people doing something better? Is there a better way to do this, a better tool, a smarter method, a faster way?

When you savor, this anxiety can melt away. You are savoring this activity, so you let the thoughts of everything else go away, and immerse yourself. You give it space and just do this, and fully appreciate it. And so you know that you're doing the perfect thing, right now, whatever it is, because nothing can be as delicious as savoring this moment.

Eating Mindfully

One of the problems that causes many people to be overweight is that they eat too much (you might say it's the main problem). A big reason people eat too much is that they eat large amounts of food, quickly. It's tasty, so eat it fast! And get some more! I know, because I did this for years. Still do sometimes.

But I've also learned, much of the time, to savor my food. And when you do this, you don't just cram it down your throat, but you pause for each bite (don't reach for the next bite as soon as you put the last bite into your mouth), and you give it space, and you savor it. This means that you really notice every taste of that bite, the texture of it, and give thought to where it came from, who made it, what went into it (not chemicals, we hope!), and what it will do for our body.

It's hard to overeat when you savor each bite, and take your time. In this way, you can also learn to enjoy healthier foods, like dark leafy greens or raw almonds and walnuts or tempeh or tofu. You can also eat healthfully most of the time, and then enjoy a bit of birthday cake without overdoing it, because you just need a little bit in order to savor it.

Exercise

I love to exercise, which is a statement most people probably wouldn't make. I love the exertion of a good hard workout, the good feeling of lifting something heavy, the feel of the ground moving under my feet as I go for a quiet run.

Most people dread exercise, and so put it off. But you can savor a workout. You can savor a good walk or a run or ride. Give the workout some space, and fully be in the moment as you do it, fully notice your body as it moves and works, fully notice your breathing and feet as they touch the ground, fully notice the air and smells and sights around you. Savoring exercise makes it more enjoyable, makes you more likely to do it, and makes the time you spend doing it perfect.

Living in the Present

Savor everything you do, every experience. There is no moment that cannot be savored — even those routine moments, even those times when you're having a conflict with someone else, even those times when you're alone with nothing to do.

Savoring is about learning to live presently, to fully enjoy the gift of each moment, to give that moment the space and attention it deserves. It takes practice, but it's a delicious practice.

'As you walk and eat and travel, be where you are. Otherwise you will miss most of your life.'

~**Buddha**