

Given that life is uncertain, how do you want to live your life?, by Jason Espada

It would be one thing if we had unlimited time here. We could afford to spend hour and days, months and years distracting ourselves with meaningless activities; or, we could let ourselves get annoyed by every perceived slight, and carry it with us wherever we go, for years; we could even put off what is most important to us – it would be no problem. But our time here has a limit. Day follows day, weeks, months, and then years go by. The truth is, we only get to live this life once, and time passes quickly. Maybe we have known this intellectually, superficially, or even had some deeper, momentary experience of it, but then we forget about it, or suppress it.

Our situation here is actually even more compelling than just being limited, *because we also don't know how long any of us have here on earth*. Maybe that's frightening to think about, or it evokes such sadness, and resistance, but it's important to get past that.

Realizing the fact that our lives, such as they are now, don't go on forever, and, what's more, that we don't know how much time we have really shows us what is essential to do *now*, without waiting. We don't have time to waste, or to hold grudges, or to put off what has the most meaning for us. We don't know if the person we see this morning, who ignored us, will still be here tomorrow, next week, or next month, or next year. Given that, how do we want to respond to them? How do we want to hold them in our thoughts?

And see this too: we also don't know for sure if we'll be here on this earth next month, or in one year, or five years. It's important to see this for more than just a moment. It needs to become a stable, insight-knowledge that guides our lives, and encourages us to bring out the best we have to give.

The effect of this can be great. If we were generous before, it becomes an abundant generosity, one that is so much freer, more complete, and more joyful; if we had a measure of fearlessness to us, it becomes bold, powerful, and unconquerable; and if we had the thought before to help others, and felt empowered by that, now this motivation becomes fully clear and effective in our lives.

Seeing that there's no time to lose awakens our love. It brings out all our gifts. We can say that the awareness of impermanence is a midwife of love. This realization brings with it great gratitude, love and care for our family, friends, and all those we share this life with. It is truly an awakening, a revolution of values; it helps us to see the most fulfilling way to live here, and it brings courage and energy, and that is why I would urge you to think this over carefully, and to keep it in mind, my friends.

By contrast, when we don't remember the impermanent nature of our lives, and of the lives of those around us, then we can say we sleep, or that we walk in a fog, not sure of where we are or where we're going, not seeing those to the left or the right, ahead or behind us. Don't most people here live that way? What a loss! I'm sure that not seeing this one truth accounts for so much of the small mindedness and neglect here of what has real value.

Love does not arise in the world without causes and conditions. We have it in us to care for one another, to forgive, to be generous, to delight in one another, but, if we're not careful, we may sleep, and miss all of these.

Love comes fully alive when it really sees the truth of our being here together – that there is no time to waste, not an hour, not even a minute. To see and embrace our lives fully we need this insight. Then, much of what we may have struggled to do before happens on its own. This is an active understanding that creates a life of genuine fulfillment here.