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**The Things You Can See
Only When You Slow
Down: How to Be Calm in
a Busy World**

Made by Blinkist



These key insights in blinks were written by a team of experts at Blinkist. We screen the world of nonfiction to choose the very best books. Then, we read them deeply and transform them into this concise format that brings you the most inspiring ideas from the text.

Maybe these blinks will inspire you to dig deeper, or maybe they're enough to start you thinking and then on to something new. However you read blinks, we hope they help you become an even brighter you.

What's in it for me? Learn inspiring life lessons from one of the world's most popular Buddhist meditation teachers.

We live in incredibly hectic times. Between work, family, friends, and the day-to-day drama that surrounds us, it's all too easy to allow life to feel overwhelming. When's the last time you took a moment to focus completely on yourself?

Too often, we allow outside forces to take control. But it isn't really the world that's moving too fast. It's our minds. Our perception of the world

governs how we see it. So if we can slow our minds down and allow ourselves the space to breathe, we'll see that the world slows down right along with it. When that happens, we can see that the problems that once threatened to overwhelm us don't seem quite as huge.

In these blinks, we'll discover tips for dealing with self-esteem, relationships, and your career. We'll cultivate such qualities as awareness, humility, trust, and confidence. There are many paths to enlightenment, but each of them begins in the same place: your mind.

In these blinks, you'll discover

- why your friendships are like roaring fires;
- how to calm a mind racing with negative thoughts; and
- just how much other people think about you.

When your mind rests, the world rests.

Have you ever become so engrossed in a project that everything else ceases to exist? The rest of the world hasn't gone away, of course. But our perspective has focused with such clarity that the project in front of us feels like the entire universe. This, for Buddhists, is just one example of how much our mind controls the world around us.

Our reality consists only of what our mind chooses to focus on at that moment. It isn't the

situation we find ourselves in that's making us happy or unhappy, anxious, or relaxed. It's our perspective on the situation that's creating those feelings.

The key message here is: When your mind rests, the world rests.

More often than not, it's our perception of things that happened in the past or things that may happen in the future that drives negative thoughts and emotions. But we can't control or change the past or the future. So why worry about them? Why allow our perception of them to make us unhappy?

The only thing we can control is what's happening right now. So release those thoughts of the past and future, and allow our waves of emotion to flow freely. They'll heal themselves and disappear in due course.

Focusing on the present means practicing awareness. If you're feeling stressed, be aware of that stress. If you're feeling angry, be aware of your anger. It doesn't do any good to bury it. Awareness brings clarity and purity back into our lives. Negative emotions are temporary. They dissipate quickly once we shine the light of awareness on them.

An excellent way to manage your stress level is to simply make a list of everything in your life that's causing you anxiety. Write down everything you need to get done, from minor, everyday chores like washing the dishes to bigger goals like changing your career. Writing them down removes them from your mind and contains all of your worries on a single sheet of paper. Once you've written them down, go to bed and get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow, you can begin to tackle them one by one.

Self-awareness must come from within. Reframing our

perception of the world to
focus on the here and now is
the first step on the journey
toward enlightenment.

You are not your feelings.

It isn't easy to be aware of our emotions, especially the negative ones. When we feel them churn up, we want to control them, tamp them back down and make them go away. This is the wrong approach. We need to be aware of them, befriend them, allow them to flow naturally through us. However, we cannot allow them to define us.

The key message here is: You are not your feelings.

Imagine a fish tank with a layer of mud at the bottom. If you agitate the water, the mud churns up and swirls around. To get the mud to settle, do you plunge your hands into the water and try to push it back down to the bottom of the tank? Of course not. Left alone, the mud will settle back on the bottom where it belongs all on its own.

Negative emotions are the mud in your mind. They have many names: anger, disappointment, jealousy, hatred. But these are just words, and they aren't very helpful. Instead of focusing on the labels, focus on the energy

that's behind those emotions and try to figure out where it's coming from. In time, that energy changes. It ebbs and flows until, sooner or later, it's replaced by something else. Don't try to assign it a value. Just simply be aware of the energy without any judgment.

When you're feeling low, take just three minutes to sit quietly with your feelings. Simply observe them without trying to change them or assign a value to them. You'll soon feel the energy behind those feelings changing. You can't control your feelings any more than you can

control the weather. Even the worst storm eventually passes.

In the same way, you are not defined by your feelings any more than the sky is defined by a thunderstorm. You are the conscious being who is aware of these emotions, who sees them approach and inevitably disappear.

Once we see how our emotional energy changes, we can realize that change is inevitable in all things. Just think about all of the things you cared about the most when you were a child. Now think about what you care about today. We change without even

realizing it. Change is neither good nor bad. It just is.

Unfortunately, most people live their lives resisting change and the way things are. When we resist, we're constantly trying to adjust ourselves to fit the world. But if we simply accept the way things are, we can relax. Let the world change. You can't stop it. You can only be a part of it.

Choose happiness, not success.

No matter what we do for a living, we all want to be a success. But what exactly does success mean? Are we pursuing money? Power? A bigger office? Or is your ultimate goal something that lasts longer but is more intangible?

**The key message here is:
Choose happiness, not success.**

Chasing success often looks like this: Imagine you've been hired at a job you really love. You're passionate about the work and want to impress your bosses

and colleagues. So you go all in, working all hours, taking every chance to display how much you care. It's only natural, but it comes with problems.

Sometimes, our passion gets in the way of doing the work well. This is especially true if you're not taking into account the needs of others. For example, imagine you're a brand new teacher on the first day of class. You've been working toward this for years and you're eager to impart everything you've learned to your students. So you create a syllabus that includes as much material as you can possibly cover, scheduling what

you believe will be challenging projects, stimulating reading material, and outside fieldwork.

But after about six weeks, you notice that your students are lagging behind. Assignments are turned in late, and no one is participating in the extra work outside of class at all. You've failed to take into account that this is just one class of many for your students. Your passion is not their passion. Not yet, anyway.

In other words, your eagerness does not necessarily equal effectiveness. And if we are not effective in our jobs, we can't be

happy. We must combine both passion and wisdom to work effectively with others.

So chasing success can bring problems; it's also never-ending. Whenever we chase success, we're using an arbitrary benchmark that was handed to us by someone else. If we achieve it, what happens next? There's always another goal to chase on the horizon.

Happiness, on the other hand, is a goal we define ourselves. Only you can decide what makes you truly happy. And when you receive enjoyment from your work, other people see it. Would

you rather work with someone who enjoys what they do or with someone who seems miserable whether or not they get the job done?

At the end of the day, don't worry about what the world says you should do to be happy. No one can define that but you. Stay true to yourself, figure out what you really want out of life, and pursue it.

Love without ego and selfishness.

Our pursuit of happiness should never place wealth and physical things ahead of forging meaningful, long-lasting relationships with our families, our friends, and our partners. Unfortunately, it isn't always easy to maintain harmony in our relationships.

The key message here is: Love without ego and selfishness.

So how do we do that?

Here are some tips, starting with how we can communicate our

true feelings.

Too many of us fall into the trap of saying things we don't really mean. Politicians do this all the time. They say whatever sounds good in an effort to get people to like them. When we do this, we're speaking from the head, not the heart.

When we speak from the heart, we speak with words that are simple and pure, as long as our hearts are guided by equality, humility, and honesty. Because our message is simple, there's no fear that we will be misunderstood.

Next, how do you deal with people with whom you'd much rather not have to deal?

When we're confronted by someone we dislike, we have a tendency to step up to the challenge and push back. Why do we do this? We're only extending the amount of time we have to spend with this disagreeable person. Instead, take a deep breath, wait 30 seconds, and simply walk away.

From time to time, even our dearest friends will rub us the wrong way. A healthy relationship is like a roaring campfire. It provides heat and

light even on the darkest night. But if we sit too close to it for too long, we'll get uncomfortable and maybe even burned. After we step away for a while, we welcome the fire's warmth. In other words, every relationship requires some space if we're to reap its full benefits.

Finally, how do we deal with relationships that end?

It's always painful when a relationship ends. The best thing we can do is be aware of our feelings of hurt and anger, then, when we're ready, forgive the other person and let them go.

You're not doing this for them.
You're doing it for yourself, so
you can be free and go on with
your life.

Forgiveness requires absolute
humility and empathy.
Swallowing your pride is never
easy, but it's necessary in order
to let go of the negative energy
before it consumes you.

Give your life purpose by living with confidence and conviction.

We all want to give our lives meaning. But too often, we look outside ourselves for satisfaction. We look to our careers or our relationships with others. But real fulfillment comes from within. Real fulfillment requires strength, courage, and self-awareness.

The key message here is: Give your life purpose by living with confidence and conviction.

When you reflect on your life, it's natural to focus solely on the

highs and the lows. But think about what you did over the last week. Perhaps you had a major victory or a catastrophic loss. But you also waited in line at the store, you commuted back and forth to work, you washed the dishes and brushed your teeth. The point is that there are far more ordinary hours in a day than extraordinary ones. Real, lasting happiness requires us to look for joy in these mundane, everyday activities.

We can begin to find these moments of joy if we take ownership of everything we do. If you see litter, pick it up. If someone asks for your opinion,

give it honestly. Taking ownership of these small moments adds to our feeling of importance and self-worth.

Also, stop caring what other people think. We spend too much time worrying about this. This fear prevents us from living with conviction and taking ownership of our lives. First off, you need to realize that people are not as interested in you as you think. Can you remember what your best friend wore last week or exactly what your spouse ordered the last time you went out to dinner? We think about other people all the time. But it's usually just for a

few minutes, and then our minds move on to something else.

Second, one of the most liberating gifts you can give yourself is the realization that not everyone has to like you. If you're being honest with yourself, you realize there are certain people that you simply don't get along with, whether it's a colleague, a family member, or even a public figure. And that's perfectly fine. You can't control what other people think about you. Let them have their opinion and move on.

Once we stop worrying about what other people think, we can look within ourselves and ask what we really want. Remember to find joy in the steps we take to achieve our goals, not only in the end results. And when you meet someone pursuing their dreams, treat them as you would hope to be treated yourself. Just a simple act of encouragement, kindness, and hope can change someone's life forever.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks is:

The demands of the modern world don't have to overwhelm us. Through mindfulness and self-awareness, we can alter our perspective and recognize that we are just one small part of a much bigger universe. Delight in your corner of that universe, take ownership of it and remember that long-term happiness is more important, and more attainable, than immediate success.

Actionable advice:

Find your calling.

If your job makes you unhappy, it's possible that you just haven't found the right path. Expose yourself to as many different experiences as possible, whether it's by volunteering in different projects or organizations or simply by reading. By cultivating new relationships, you'll gain additional self-awareness of your strengths, your interests, and the possibilities that exist for you.

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What to read next: *Outer Order, Inner Calm*, by Gretchen Rubin

You've just learned how we can bring a sense of peace and fulfillment to our lives by slowing down and becoming more self-aware. If these blinks have piqued your interest in leading a more mindful life, then you might also enjoy our blinks

to *Outer Order, Inner Calm*, by Gretchen Rubin.

These blinks explore the delicate art of decluttering. In them, you'll learn how surrounding yourself with items that bring you happiness can greatly improve your well-being. If you're curious to find out which items you should have in your home, and which ones you should throw out, check out our blinks to *Outer Order, Inner Calm*.

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