



FIONA HOBAN

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If not now, then when?

You can only breathe in the now. You can't breathe in the past and you can't breathe in the future. You can only breathe in the now. So you can only live in the now. If only our minds could learn this truth! How much of our headspace is taken up by going back into the past or going forward into the future?

I often wonder what the future will hold; sometimes I'm apprehensive about it, other times I'm more optimistic. But here's the thing: if you want to know what the future will hold, tune into your base level of contentment right now. Because whatever level of contentment you find, that is what will be with you in the future – regardless of what the future brings.

Studies have shown that when people have a big win on the lotto, they invariably experience a massive surge of excitement, celebration etc. But these feelings are relatively short-lived. It's only a matter of time before they return to their base level of contentment they had before their win. So if they were a miserable so and so before their win, chances are they will return to being a miserable so and so.

I said this to a friend of mine once and she replied, "I know money can't buy me happiness but I'd rather be a rich miserable so and so than a poor miserable so and so!" It's hard to argue with that I suppose, but I think the trick is to be happy regardless of being



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rich or poor. How is that possible? With so much financial hardship, so much stress and pressure, so much uncertainty, so much fear. How is it possible to be content; how is it possible to be impervious to the economic nightmare that's going on around us?

The answer may in part be found by looking at people who have been dealt a seemingly harsh card by life and yet still manage to be upbeat (this is quite different to putting on a brave public face and then going home to fall apart). What are they doing that allows their overall levels of contentment remain in tact? What's their secret? One such secret is the ability to accept whatever card has

been dealt, not to resist it in any way. Paul McCartney wrote many years ago "when I find myself in times of trouble, mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom – Let it be; let it be." This ability to "let it be" frees up energy and creates enough space

to allow solutions to be found – even if the solution is nothing more than the capacity to endure the hardship.

So as we head into 2012 many of us are wondering what it might hold for us. It would seem that regardless of what happens, it's best if I can "let it be". And the level of happiness it may deliver is no more than what this present moment delivers. So if I'm hoping for a happy 2012 I'd better make sure that my "now" is happy. As the saying goes – if not now, then when? **CL**



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that you've gained further experience in terms of doing interviews even if you didn't get the job.

Saying 'God, that's awful, I didn't do well in that' is not going to help drive you forwards with confidence to achieve what you want.

Celebrating doesn't mean splashing out with money or celebrating with food. Traditionally this is what we've always done – it's the old 'If you're good I'll give you a sweet' way of thinking. We have to untrain ourselves from that.

Make a list ahead of time, too, of how you're going to celebrate when you achieve a particular goal-step. It might be with a book or going to the cinema or having a candlelit bath or half an hour's peace listening to music – some small reward that you can look forward to.

11. CULTIVATE AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Valuing the little things in your life is important. Don't always be looking for the big thing. At the end of the day what do we all want? In individual coaching sessions I say to the person 'if I could grant you three wishes what would you ask for?' Most people say happiness, a healthy family and a secure future. It doesn't have to mean a big car or house – it can mean lots of other smaller, more important things.

12. TELL SOMEONE OF YOUR GOALS

Tell someone of your goal and look forward to telling them that you've achieved it. Remember, we all have the

ability to make good choices but if we go on making the choices we've been making, nothing will change. Who was it that defined insanity as continuing to do the same thing and expecting a different result? Believe in yourself and you can make changes.

13. LET LIFE BEGIN AT THE EDGE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Making changes can involve going outside your comfort zone a little bit but life begins there. You almost have to get comfortable being uncomfortable – that's the hard part and the time when people may give up but that's where change starts to happen.

14. PERSIST. PERSIST. PERSIST.

Don't give up! This is why it's important to have set realistic goals at the start. If the goal isn't realistic then you may fall back and say 'ah sure, I'm not going to do it anyway' and go back to your old habits. Don't! Anybody who has ever achieved anything has not found it easy. Success is about learning from your failures and not saying it doesn't really matter if I get there or not – it does matter that you get there.

15. COMMIT TO YOURSELF

Commit to yourself – this is huge. A common one is to make excuses like 'I can't do that because it can affect somebody else' but you are as important as the other person. Mothers do this all the time. 'No, I can't go for a walk because Mary

wants me to bring her into town'. Mary doesn't have to get everything immediately. The message Mary is getting is that mammy is not important. It is about valuing yourself, knowing that mammy has as many rights as everybody else.

People come to me for personal development courses and they say 'My husband doesn't seem to respect me or my teenagers won't listen to me.'

Part of the reason they don't listen is that the mother's view is almost not valid because she doesn't, in her behaviour, demonstrate that she is important. She has set the scene for her to be disrespected but she doesn't see that that's what she's done.

16. VISUALISE YOU AT YOUR GOAL – POWERFUL TOOL

Imagine yourself at your goal – the weight you want to be, the fitness you want to achieve, receiving the qualification you want to achieve.

The use of visualisation is a very powerful tool because it helps to create the feeling inside that creates the belief that you can do it.

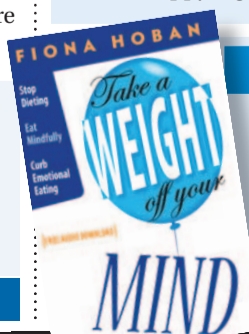
17. BEWARE THE SELF SABOTEUR

Every single one of us has a self-saboteur inside our heads. It's the part of yourself that says 'you can't do it'. This is where you have to take a stance and say 'I'm not listening to that'. In coaching I get people to give their 'saboteur' a name. It could be called anything. It's the technique of saying 'bugger off, x, I can do this and you're not going to stop me!' **CL**

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GET IN TOUCH

Fiona Hoban works as a counsellor in Westport, Co Mayo and also lectures with the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland (NCPII). She delivers well-being and motivational talks at various conferences and workshops throughout Ireland. For more details go to www.fionahoban.ie If you would like to get Fiona's advice or insight on a particular subject please email info@fionahoban.ie or write to Fiona Hoban, Irish Country Living, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.