

A man in a white shirt and shorts is walking away from the camera through a field of tall grass. The background is a sunset sky with a large, semi-transparent number '7' overlaid. The text 'SEVEN SIMPLE TRUTHS' is centered between two vertical lines.

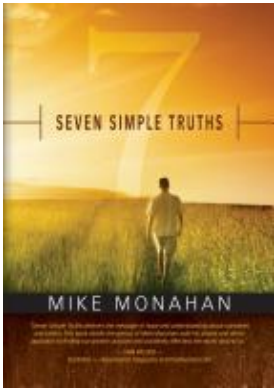
SEVEN SIMPLE TRUTHS

MIKE MONAHAN

"Seven Simple Truths delivers the message of hope and understanding about ourselves and others. This book distills the genius of Mike Monahan with his simple and direct approach to finding our greater purpose and positively affecting the world around us."

SAM WALTER

Editorial: Healy, Reynolds, McGuire and Phillips/WRCA, Inc.



By reading Seven Simple Truths, you will be able to view your life from a different perspective. Some of the most important areas of life are not taught about in school or communicated clearly by parents. Many beliefs about what will make us happy, successful and loved are misdirected at their core. Through his wit, wisdom and insight, bestselling author Mike Monahan offers readers a fresh look at how to live a happier life.

Seven Simple Truths

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—| **SEVEN SIMPLE TRUTHS** |—

Seven Simple Truths

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First Edition

RELAX... YOU CAN'T GET OUT OF LIFE ALIVE

All men think all men mortal, but themselves.

— EDWARD YOUNG

This statement seems to be so simple. After all, everyone knows they're going to die, right? Intellectually, you may know that you'll die one day, but do you assume it won't be today? Edward Young sums it up perfectly: We think we will be the exception in some way when it comes to mortality.

Can you imagine how different you would live life if you embraced the awareness of a temporary life? Can you grasp the power of *temporary*? Can you imagine the awareness that would motivate you to live life in the moment? This may seem to be a simple idea, but it would change the course of the world if enough people embraced living in the moment. Let's take a look at what keeps you from living in harmony, from living a more relaxed and purposeful life.

Years ago, my wife, Nancy, and I rescued a dog we named Ben. Ben had been abused and was rather shy. He was a great dog because he was low-maintenance. Ben's life, more or less, was to lie around waiting to eat; he was very well-behaved. We were unaware of his breed, but our vet told us he was an English Setter. Ben was in such poor health when we found him, we thought he wouldn't live long; to our surprise, he lived with us for 10 years.

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When Ben passed away, it was very painful for our family, so I decided Ben would be our last dog.

Fast forward a few years, and Nancy is scheduled to have brain surgery in early January. It's one week before Christmas, and low and behold, I see an ad for English Setter puppies in our community paper. It was the first and last time I ever saw an ad listing that breed for sale. Against my vow not to have another dog, I decided to buy a puppy for Nancy, to keep her company and cheer her up during the long recovery that was predicted. The ad read "English Setter Puppies—FSBD." I didn't know what "FSBD" meant, but I knew it was going to cost me a few hundred dollars more!

Once I saw the puppies, I fell in love with one of the little females. I brought her home and gave her to Nancy on Christmas. Nancy decided to call her Belle, and Belle is a super-smart dog. From the beginning, she would let us know when she needed to go out and take care of business. Just like Ben, I thought Belle was going to be a relaxed and easy-going dog.

Well, that idea only lasted three weeks and then something happened. Each time I took Belle outside, she would move like a cat stalking its prey. At first, I couldn't figure out what Belle was doing. Then one day it came to me. FSBD—Field and Stream Bird Dog! Belle was a setter, and somewhere in her DNA, the switch had been turned on. She was on the hunt for birds.

For the past nine years, Belle has hunted birds in our yard. She runs from tree to tree looking for birds. She's actually worn paths between the trees in our backyard. When she's inside, she sits by the door, waiting for us to let her out. In the winter, Belle gets depressed because she can't be outside hunting birds as often.

Why do I tell this story? Belle lives her life in the moment, purposefully. Just like Belle, I think each of us has a purpose in life. Belle's purpose is to hunt birds. We bought Belle to be our

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pet, but Belle is a bird dog first and foremost; she's our pet second. We would like Belle to stop hunting so we can play with her, but this doesn't work well. Belle doesn't pay much attention to our expectations. She has one mission, and that's to hunt birds. It doesn't matter that our yard hasn't seen a bird in years; Belle's purpose is to hunt. She lives in the moment. Like Moses, Belle knows her purpose, and she doesn't feel lost. Looking for birds or looking for the Promised Land are more alike than you can imagine.

Belle is a great example for us humans. If Belle could talk, she may ask, "What is your purpose?" If, like Belle, we are born with a purpose, do you know what it is that you are here to do? You can't take anything with you when you die, and you will die, so life must be about the hunt. Belle never gets the bird. But her purpose is to point and hunt birds, not to catch them. Belle's success is in her action; her actions are her result. If I was a hunter working with Belle, I'd be responsible for shooting the bird. Belle doesn't need a hunter to point birds. Her title is English Setter FSBD—Field and Stream Bird Dog.

Your title may read something like this: Human Being LABL—Love and Be Loved. Could that be the purpose of all human beings, to love and be loved? What if the journey, not the destination, is the real purpose of life? If it's all about the hunt, then you may need a new set of truths. In the end you will die, so how you used each moment is the real question—it's the sum of your life. Like Belle, are you spending your moments hunting passionately?

LIFE DOESN'T COME WITH A GUARANTEE

Knowing you can't get out of life alive, it would stand to reason you would use each moment to the fullest. You can't accumulate moments. All you can do is decide how you want to use your moments. This is where life gets tricky. When you think you "have

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time,” which is a guarantee of sorts, you spend your moments differently.

I’ve worked in the personal-development field for more than 25 years, and most people I work with act as if they have a guaranteed amount of future time. When you believe that you’re in control of your future, it will always lead you to think you can put off the present moment. If you’re like most people, you’re putting off important areas of life and saying it’s because you’re too busy. “Now” gets replaced by guaranteed future time: “I can do that next week.” Your actions quickly take a different direction because you believe you have a guaranteed amount of time in the future.

Because you have guaranteed future time, your children, spouse and friends can wait. You think your aging parents have more time, so they can wait for you to make time. Friends start to drop off, and so does the fun. You’re focused on your future, and life gets serious. Now you’re in serious relationships, or you’re too busy even to fuss with relationships. Pressure builds because you have to take care of future business. You convince yourself that it won’t be all that long, and your efforts will be worth it some future day! When you retire, you’ll have a nice nest egg. You’ll have fun a little later, but right now, you have more important things to do like earning a living.

I was like most others, rushing around being busy with life. Back in June 1987, I attended a personal-development seminar in Cincinnati, which was hosted by the nonprofit Life Success Seminars. The facilitator, the late Jim Quinn, said something that stuck in my head. He said, “There’s no sense taking life too seriously because you’re not going to get out of it alive, anyway.” I chuckled along with my fellow attendees in the seminar that weekend, thinking it was a cute statement.

As time went on and I digested his statement over the ensuing months, I realized what he said was truly profound. Living in the

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fast lane allowed me to live a surface existence. On the surface, his statement was clever. But as I internalized what I experienced that seminar weekend, life took on a deeper meaning and so did his statement. I became aware of all the circumstances in my life that were out of my control. And yet, I was using my moments stressing over current circumstances and future events that were outside of my control. I realized that most of the people I knew also were stressed about situations outside their control.

I became more aware of my behavior and of the behavior of those around me. We were all, for the most part, acting in the same fashion. My friends, family and co-workers all acted as if we had long lives ahead of us and had the convenience of putting off some of the more important things in life.

“Urgent” has a way of confusing people into thinking they’re doing what is important. After all, I had to earn a living to feed my family. I had to go drinking with my buddies to release the stress of working so hard. Life was in-charge, and I was reacting to the circumstances I encountered. Many urgent things needed my attention. Oddly enough, the most important matters weren’t urgent—they could be put off and I’d get to them a little later down the road.

If you knew you were about to die, would your “urgent” list be redefined? What would you move to the top of your list? If you’re living as if you have a guarantee, you’re living in denial... *“All men think all men mortal, but themselves.”*

DENIAL IS LIKE PUTTING BLINDERS ON A HORSE TO REDUCE FEAR

During my many years of working with people in coaching sessions and personal-development seminars and trainings, I began to notice a pattern. I noticed that people were in some type of denial about death and/or trying to beat it. As a matter of fact, this denial often becomes a person’s purpose. Blinders are put on a horse to

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reduce his fear of what's going on around him, but humans use denial to distract them from what they can't handle or fear.

When I say "denial of death," I'm not referring to someone with a terminal disease who is processing what will happen. What I'm referring to is the ability to convince yourself that you have a guarantee when it comes to future time. Most of the men I coach are lost in their work, building their future career. They act as if their relationships, marriage and family can be put on hold while they try to build wealth or accumulate all the toys that money can buy. Work and providing for the family becomes their purpose. They tell me they love their wife and children, and that is why they sacrifice so many hours at work. If that were true, then their behavior would remain true to their mission, no matter what the circumstances. But it doesn't ring true when faced with a new set of circumstances.

You've met the men I speak of. They end up in divorce court, and guess what their biggest complaint is? You guessed it: They cry foul because all their money is going for child support. All those years, they said they were working to support the family they love, only to resent paying support money after the marriage failed. If they wanted to support their children in the marriage, then it stands to reason they would embrace supporting the children after their divorce.

Obviously, there must've been other reasons for being at work and away from the family. Maybe they had something to prove, which we'll take a look at in Chapter 2. In my experience, avoiding intimacy is one of the leading reasons why people spend so many hours away from home, under the guise of providing for their family. This scenario plays out often: Good people looking for the Promised Land end up lost in divorce court or consistently have failed relationships.

Denying the moment always will have you taking a different

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path in hopes of a better future or trying to change past results. How many urgent things have taken you away from what's most important? Do you take time for self-reflection to better understand your real purpose? Is your day filled with harmony and trust or stress and fear?

I believe that most parents love their children and want to be good providers. That being said, it seems common to have more urgent things grab your attention, and “providing” represents “love.” Eventually, you believe that providing is sufficient love and think that you haven't put the family on hold, after all. Now you have time to go accumulate.

I know it sounds reasonable because everyone is doing the same thing. We're all preparing for a future that may never show up. Thinking you have time allows you to deny what is most important in the present moment. You can deny what's needed in the moment, and blame it on preparing for the future. I'm not saying you shouldn't look to your future. What I suggest is that the reward must be in the present moment if you want freedom. While you're making a living and building your future, are you willing to sacrifice weekly work time to be with your family? Most of my wealth was accumulated after my kids were grown, which may be a little late, but I'm still doing pretty well. When you realize there's an unknown end, you'll embrace using each moment to the fullest.

After more than 25 years of working with both women and men, I've come to realize that work is where most men go to hide, with a hidden hope that they'll feel important. Men typically don't like to express or share their feelings, so they go to work and achieve; it just seems simpler.

When it comes to denial, men are masters of avoiding the moment. They're too busy taking care of business, so to speak. Men also treat relationships like work. After all, our job is to fix problems, and feelings are problems! The reason I know this is

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that I'm a man, and I've done the exact same things as other men. But when I was in my forties and after my divorce, I decided to look at life differently. I decided to reset my priorities so I could relate better to my second wife.

Women, on the other hand, seem to avoid the moment differently. They focus on keeping it all together. Their family or their circle of friends is usually most important to them. Within the family, a woman often has a special project—the husband.

I've noticed that when it comes to marriage, women and men have different goals. Guys want to get married so they can relax and get back to the way life used to be. Guys get married because dating is way too hard; it's too much work to keep up a caring front.

But I've learned that a woman usually has a different plan in her head before marriage. It goes something like this: "When we get married, he will quit going out with his buddies. He will help around the house, and we will sit and share our feelings."

Most women I meet have a funny rule that guys don't understand. Women tell me that they shouldn't have to tell their husbands what they need—their husbands should know. And if they have to ask for what they need, then why bother? Add to that: "I've asked over and over, and I've given up."

In her relationship, a woman wants a partner who listens. But she usually finds herself being interrupted with what she "needs to fix" because men hear feelings as a problem to be taken care of. It's easy to see that in an attempt to share her feelings and not be fixed, she eventually finds a friend to talk with rather than her husband.

I think most couples don't have the skill set to communicate on a daily basis. They may be able to navigate problems, but sharing feelings and being intimate is a much different type of communication. This is why so many empty nesters have

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relationship problems; in their marriage, they've been wearing blinders that came off when the kids left home.

These behaviors are only two examples of what I've observed through my work over the years. But I do know that women and men are very different. Women and men understand the difference intellectually, but both suck at working with the emotional impact these differences have in a relationship. Whether you think being married or being single will make you happy is only a projection to the future. "Are you happy right now?" is the real question. If you're not happy before you marry, I assure you that the other person isn't going to make you happy. We think love will make us happy and get us through tough moments, but the reality is that it takes commitment and honest communication on a moment-to-moment basis.

What I've concluded is that we're all trying to prove something to the world, and that this proving process keeps us stuck in the past or living in the future, missing the current moment. (In Chapter 2, I'll discuss the need to prove and how it distracts you from living in the moment.) If you didn't have anything to prove to yourself or others, what would you do differently right now? What do you need that you're not communicating? What about your relationship scares you? What would be the worst that could happen if you ask for what you need until you receive it?

INVINCIBILITY IS FOR FAIRY TALES

Some people act as if they are invincible and can beat death. Beating death can come in the form of unhealthy behaviors, like drugs, alcohol, smoking and obesity. I was guilty of several of these in my younger years. I smoked cigarettes and drank more than my share of beer. Even though my dad died from these bad habits, I acted as if I could beat lung cancer, emphysema and cirrhosis of the liver. While I made the decision to stop both behaviors when

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I was 41, and I've avoided some of the consequences, I'm sure my past behaviors continue to have a lasting affect on my body.

How did I convince myself that smoking wouldn't kill me? It was simple. Denial! I was young and invincible. I figured the average person lived into their seventies. I was young, so it wasn't my time to think I could die. I acted as if I had a pass, some kind of guarantee, to live well into the future.

I don't think my story is unique. Most young people I meet today have that same attitude of invincibility. Denial allows you to abuse your body with drugs, alcohol, food or whatever you choose. Denial allows you to get behind the wheel of a car after drinking too much and risk killing yourself or others. Denial allows you to have unprotected sex because you think you'll never be the one to get pregnant or end up with a sexually transmitted disease. Denial allows you to text and drive because that wreck will never happen to you. We all act as if it only happens to the other person... *All men think all men mortal, but themselves.*

My point isn't to pass a moral judgment but to make a mortal statement. We all do things that we probably wouldn't do if we believed we could die at any moment. That being said, I'm not suggesting you live life in fear of imminent death. Having a beer in and of itself isn't a big deal, but using alcohol to avoid life can become a habit—and that is a big deal.

If you don't like yourself, you are disconnected from your purpose; it makes sense that you would choose some form of self-destructive behavior. You don't have to hate yourself; it just takes a little non-acceptance to have devastating results. If you have no greater purpose, then life has little value beyond settling for what life delivers. When you are in the midst of self-destructive behavior, it's about immediate gratification—not purposeful choices. You aren't thinking about the ramifications.

Tomorrow as you drive to work or school, notice how many

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people are texting and driving. It's crazy. They may think that text is really important to maintaining the relationship, but not if it kills me! Everyone thinks that they won't wreck and kill someone—it will never happen to them. These people have convinced themselves, at some level, that they are invincible. Don't confuse this behavior with living in the moment; denial is not part of the moment.

The ability humans have to distract themselves off-purpose is amazing. Yet some events can grab you by the throat and jerk you back into the moment. When you're in denial, you act as if you're taking care of what is important. For example, you might think that texting someone is urgent and more important than anything else, including driving safely. It seems that way in the moment, right? But if that were true, would you then agree the consequences are just?

Imagine for a moment that you hit your best friend's car while you are texting, and you kill her and her entire family. Is texting still as important? If texting is most important, why now—after the wreck—do you say that you made a mistake? Because now you face the consequences of your actions, while you were in denial when you were texting and driving. After all, you were dealing with urgent matters and thought something bad couldn't happen to you. You believed you were invincible in that moment. *All men think all men mortal, but themselves.*

Once you wake up to living in the moment, all of life changes. If life has no greater purpose, why do so many criminals fight the death penalty and choose to spend their life in a small jail cell? In our own way, we all are like criminals. You get busy with life and distraction sets in; eventually, you're way off-track. Before you know it, you wake up in a prison of some type. Most people end up in a self-destructive, self-imposed prison of some kind. Success, fame, drugs, money or any number of things can inflate your ego and distract you from the moment in hopes of a brighter future.

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But as the old saying goes, “You can’t take it with you.”

In what areas of life do you feel imprisoned? Are you the master of your life or a slave to life? Where have you surrendered to the idea of not being invincible and found freedom?

YOU CAN'T OUTSMART DEATH

Another way to deny death and not live in the moment is by practicing healthy behavior. I know that sounds a little odd, but I witness it with my friend, Bob, who is afraid of death. Bob is fanatical about health. His dad died early from a heart attack, and he is determined not to end up like his father. He vowed he would watch everything he ate and make healthy decisions to avoid the same fate as his father. When we go to lunch, he usually opts for a healthy salad. He preaches to me about my diet all the time: “If you want to live a long and healthy life, Mike, you need to eat healthier food.” Personally, I like to mix it up a little, in an unhealthy way, when it comes to eating. I’m a cheeseburger and fries kind of guy, so I often say: “If I had to eat what you eat, Bob, I would have little reason to want to live a long life!”

Bob not only eats healthy, he’s also that guy you see out running each and every day. It doesn’t matter if it’s raining or snowing, he’s out hitting the pavement. From my point of view, he does all the right things to avoid a heart attack—other than his stressing about not having a heart attack all the time.

While I admire Bob’s commitment to healthy living, I notice it’s driven from fear. Bob is afraid of dying young like his dad, and he stresses out about it frequently. Losing his dad to a heart attack is a memory that is difficult for Bob to shake. He often says that had his dad taken better care of himself, he would still be around today. Bob’s belief is an assumption that he knows what caused his dad’s heart attack and ultimate death. Bob spends an enormous amount of his time in the past with memories of the tragedy, and

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the rest of the time he spends obsessing about a healthy future. Bob's purpose is to eat healthy and beat death, based on his assumption about his dad's death.

Are there things from your past you assume you understand, just like Bob, that now give you a false sense of direction or purpose? Have you ever said, "I'll never turn out like my mother or father," and then let this belief dictate your behavior?

The funny thing about not being in the moment is that you seldom get to enjoy life. Bob never seems to enjoy eating; it's just a function to get him to a healthier future. Bob never finds enjoyment in running; he runs alone so he isn't distracted from his obsession of being healthy. So how well does it work?

Believe it or not, Bob had a heart attack in his early forties, and he recovered just fine. I don't know why Bob had a heart attack. It may have been lettuce poisoning! Bob does all the right things. It may have been hereditary, stress-related or some other reason. What I do know is that Bob acted as if he could beat death. As I said, I admire his discipline for healthy behavior, but he doesn't get a pass. Like all of us, Bob doesn't get to determine all of the factors that determine death. Just like everyone else, Bob doesn't get to decide everything in life.

I spent 20 years drinking and smoking, and my heart is fine. Bob eats healthy and exercises, and he had a heart attack at age 42. I acted like my behavior didn't matter, and Bob acted like he could beat death; we're both delusional. We are going to die, and we don't know when, so why do we act as if we can beat death? In a hundred years, no one will remember that Bob and I were here.

Fear of death diminishes life and creates stress, which can accelerate death. How would your life be different if you had no concern for death and its arrival? If you believe in eternity, then death is not the end—there's no need to stress. If you don't believe in eternity, then you won't know you're dead, so there's no need for

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stress! My question is: “Why are you stressed?”

OUT OF THE MOMENT = STRESS

Stress is one of the leading causes of disease. Dis-ease: Lack of peace and harmony. Now that I’m 66, I realize that I used much of my time worrying. You name it, I’ve worried about it. I worried about my future and my past. I worried about what my friends and my enemies thought about me. I worried about my children and my grandchildren. I worried I wouldn’t be successful, and I worried I would be successful. I worried I’d be broke, and I worried I’d be rich. I worried that I worried too much. And all those things were beyond my control, and a waste of valuable time.

Once I realized that I was wasting precious moments worrying when I could use those moments having more fun, my life changed. Instead of working so hard to try to prove I was successful, I could spend more time drinking coffee with friends and I became more successful. Instead of trying to control my children’s behavior, I learned to have more fun with them and to be a resource for them, allowing them to learn how to be responsible. When I gave up being serious about life, I experienced more joy and became more successful.

If you have a smoke detector in your home, it’s a smart investment. So many people die each year because they don’t want to bother with putting a smoke detector in their home. Fire departments often give out smoke alarms for free, so it isn’t about the cost. The reason people don’t install smoke alarms is the same reason they don’t use their seat belts: They think it won’t happen to them. Smoke alarms are an early warning for fire. Get out quickly or you are in danger!

Stress is like a smoke detector. Stress is your body’s way of telling you to get out of the area because you are afraid or in danger. What does stress detect? Stress almost always detects that

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you're regretting something from the past or worried about the future. A stress detector tells you, "Warning! You are out of the moment." It will detect when you view something from the past as a failure or you think you're a victim. It will detect when you think you're not on-track for a future goal.

The alarm doesn't change anything; it just warns you. And then you decide the course of action you will take. Most people turn off the alarm and go about life in their usual fashion. You would never imagine someone re-entering a burning building, but people do it all the time, in essence. Where do you ignore the warnings? How does it affect you?

I work with people to help them connect the dots to better realize who they are and what they want—and to achieve both with passion. In my workshops, I ask participants to raise their hand if they can change their past. Of course, no hands go up. Next, I ask them to raise their hands if they can predict the future. Again, no hands go up. Finally, I ask, "Who has the ability to make good decisions?" Almost everyone raises his hand! My next question is this, "If you can't predict the future or change the past, why do you spend the majority of your time there?" If you have the ability to make good decisions, why aren't you making more purposeful decisions more frequently?

You have the ability to make good decisions, but do you trust that ability often? Can you imagine accepting your past? Can you imagine that your future will work out just fine? If you want to make good decisions in the moment, you must accept your past, trust your future and give up the idea of mistakes. See life as a series of adjustments, not as a series of triumphs and disasters. You make decisions based on what is right in the moment with no guarantee for the future. I told you that when our dog, Ben, died, I vowed not to get another dog because of the pain of his death. But later, Nancy's brain surgery called for a new in-the-moment

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decision, and we brought home Belle.

Over the next few days, just stop when you become aware that you're feeling stressed and ask this question: "What was I thinking about that caused my stress?" If you're feeling stress, I guarantee that you were off somewhere other than the present moment. If you have the ability to make good decisions—and indeed you do—then there's no reason to worry.

Pay attention now, because this is where it gets tricky. When you make good decisions, you're in the moment. But the instant you wonder if you made the right decision, you're out of the moment. Your decisions have no guaranteed outcome, but you can control your actions. How well are you taking care of your daily health? You can guarantee that you make healthy decisions, but then you must trust that the future will deliver. And can you apply this type of daily action and trust in other areas of your life, such as prosperity, relationships and spending quiet time in self-reflection? If you learn to enjoy the moment, your life will be enjoyable. It's that simple. The process you're applying to living will eventually determine the quality of your life!

OUTCOME IS OVERANALYZED

Imagine for a moment that you spent your entire life doing everything you loved. Would it stand to reason that you experienced a life of fulfillment? Now imagine for a moment that you spend your time planning the perfect life you want to live. Can you see the difference between the two examples, between doing what you love and planning for what you think will make you happy? You can guarantee doing what you love, but you can't guarantee future events. Oddly enough, the example without a plan leads to the better outcome.

Most "planners" I work with tell me they have accomplished everything and more that they set out to do; yet they feel something

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is missing. Outcomes are overrated. When you think your success or joy is in the outcome, you are living life out of the moment.

When you live in the past or for the future, something is missing. And what's missing is the pleasure of the moment. When you wish to be other than you are, you are wishing away your life. The guy who feels like he is failing is jealous of the gal who has succeeded. The gal who has succeeded has no personal time and begins to resent her own success. The one with time wants more money, and the one with money wants more time. The married person wishes they were single, and the single person wishes they were married. The teenager wishes they were older, while the person turning 40 goes off the deep end acting like they're a teenager again. The college student feels like they wasted a lot of time and wished they didn't have student loans. The high school grad working for minimum wage wishes they had done better in school and gone on to college. The list goes on and on.

All of these examples are based on one foundation: My happiness is in the future and/or I regret doing something in my past that caused this stress. The answer to your dilemma will never be found in the outcome. If you don't believe me, just go swap lives for one week with someone who has what you think you want. Surprise! It's not about that, either.

Here's an example of just how easy it is to fall into the trap that success and happiness are in the future. I often write at a coffeehouse, and I just took a two-minute break from writing to grab another cup of coffee. As I'm pouring the coffee, I find myself feeling stressed because I'm 7,000 words behind schedule—the schedule I made up—and I want to rush and get back on-schedule. If I fall into the word-per-day trap, I sacrifice and miss enjoying the process of writing. See—18 more words completed just explaining the concept!

What are you hoping will bring you success and happiness in

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the future? What can you do right now that will make you happy? I suggest you find 10 old people and ask them what they worried about needlessly, and learn from them!

WHY DO I AVOID THE MOMENT?

The question “Why?” is one of the greatest ways to avoid being in the moment. I know this probably sounds as if I’m playing word games, but it’s true. I love to coach people, and they love to ask me the “Why?” question. I tell them I’m really not interested in why they avoid; I’d rather talk about what they want to do right now. They usually say something like, “If I knew that, I wouldn’t need you.” Right. If you knew when your house was going to catch fire, you wouldn’t need that smoke detector, either!

If you’re asking “Why?” questions, then we know you know that you’re avoiding something, otherwise you wouldn’t have anything to ask “Why?” about. Let me explain. When a person dies, sometimes the coroner will do an autopsy to determine the cause of death. Once the results are determined, does it change the outcome? Of course not: You still have a dead body! When we ask the “Why?” question, we’re looking for evidence, just like in an autopsy. The problem is, we hope the answer will change the outcome, but it won’t. Changing your action to what you want will not only help alleviate stress, it will also change the outcome, revealing what you avoided in the first place.

Why did I say that I would never have a dog after Ben died? I didn’t want to experience the pain of losing another dog I loved, so I just avoided the situation. But was my avoidance of pain a good excuse to not give Nancy, whom I love, a companion in healing? Asking “Why?” allows us to stay stuck in our fear and to avoid the questions that need to be answered in the moment.

When you’re doing what you love, do you ask, “Why am I doing this?” When you have a great day on vacation, do you have to wonder

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why it was a great day? When you live the truth of the moment, the need to ask “Why?” goes away. I don’t understand many things in my life, but I don’t ask why because I know the answer: I’m blessed. When you live in the past, you’ll continue to ask “Why?” because you are more connected to the drama of the past than the power of the moment. Remember, living in the moment doesn’t ask “Why?” Can you devise a creative “Why?” alarm? When it goes off, it’s time to do something you love—immediately.

DRAMA IS THE UMBILICAL CORD TO THE PAST

When it comes to personal development, people find it difficult to sever the umbilical cord in certain areas of their lives. The most difficult area to leave behind is your story. You’ve spent your whole life building and developing the perfect story. You’ve added all the drama of a Broadway production, and you know your material. You’ve actually convinced yourself it’s true, and you’ve become an actor in your own play. Of course, you are the star player. But as with any good drama, you’ll need a few support roles to be filled. You probably have a villain in your life so you can play the victim sometimes. And you’ll need a hero to sweep you off your feet and make everything OK. But wait! It’s a drama and that hero probably won’t work out just right, so you may have to act like the hero to overcome the disappointment. And, of course, you don’t want the villain role—not in an obvious way, anyway—so you take on the martyr role.

As any good playwright knows, the actor has to practice their lines to deliver a great performance. That’s what it’s all about, right—a great performance? Leave your audience believing that they just had a real-life experience... Bravo! Bravo! Tomorrow is a new day and a new audience is coming your way, so you better practice your story. After all, your story is what you are selling. Outcome: The Greatest Story Ever Told—the perfect drama.

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As a coach, I work with people who want freedom from the drama and want to live more in the moment. The challenge is that they now believe their story is real, and they have made it their destiny. Asking someone to go out in the world without their story is like telling them to strip naked and face the world. The emperor has no clothes.

Your story is like a 20-year-old suit. It no longer fits and it's out of style, but it's not uncomfortable enough to get a new suit. And so it gets tighter and tighter until you feel trapped in it and you can't breath. Do you buy a new suit? No! You lose some weight to give you a little breathing room. After all, your suit is a classic: Bellbottoms or peg pants will be back in-style one day. It's rare to find an individual willing to give up their drama quickly. Drama, in the end, is all about reliving your past with a hidden hope of changing the reality. It's about non-acceptance, which is the prison most people choose to live in.

When you live in the drama of your story, you must sacrifice your current life. You're willing to offer your life to the altar of your memory. You become a dedicated archeologist visiting the tomb of the characters in your play each and every moment of your life. The moment you wake up in the morning is the only free moment you have each day. All subsequent moments are rehearsal for the audience you'll meet that day. As Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage," unless you decide to dump the drama. And the answer to your next question is, "Yes, you have a choice." You can dump the drama. Once you let it go, you'll need a drama detector (a coach or mentor) as an early warning of reoccurrence.

What are the best parts of your life story? How have you added drama to bring more power to your story? Who is your dominant character: martyr, hero, victim, skeptic, etc.?

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THINKING VS. ACTION

Thinking about the past and thinking about the future are right at the top of the list as to what will get in your way when it comes to being in the moment. Our educational system teaches us to learn and retain facts to prepare us to make good decisions. Now I'm going to tell you that this will get in the way? Yes!

Good thinking is like eating. You eat when you are hungry, not all day long. Eating isn't good or bad; it has a function. You eat at the appropriate times and go about your life the rest of the day. Your body will tell you when it's hungry; you don't have to think about it. Once it tells you that you're hungry, you may think about what you'd like to eat. But you don't have to think about eating all day long to know when you're hungry.

Imagine that all of life worked that way. Imagine you have an instinctive force inside you that actually directs you without you thinking ahead of time. Imagine the urge tells you to start painting. Write now, right now. Call your mom. Rest your body. Pray.

When you're focused on your thoughts, you miss or ignore these messages. Thinking often gets in the way of the moment. Just like the light switch on a lamp, meditation, forgiveness and other techniques can help you turn off your past-and-future thinking to be more in the moment. And just like the light switch, your choices can leave you in the dark places of your past or in the light of the moment, making good decisions. Light on, light off! You're the one who determines the outcome, not the light switch. Drama is the art of acting as if the light switch is making the decision for you to live in the dark recesses of your past.

Like most people, you may think that the mind is where all good decisions are made. I don't believe that to be true. Personally, I trust my instincts more than my thoughts. There's a big difference between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge comes from all the

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things we've learned. You go to school and gain knowledge. Wisdom, on the other hand, can't always be explained. I know there are things I just know and I wasn't taught. Many insights come from within even though we haven't had an outward reference source. Belle, our English Setter, never saw a bird before she was born, but at 10 weeks she was a bird pointer. How did she know how to walk like a cat and point? It's wired in her. It's instinctive.

Hundreds of times while in trainings or coaching, I've experienced responding in ways that surprise even me. Words come out of my mouth, and I wonder where they came from and how I knew what to say. In the beginning of my career, I would audit that voice because it didn't always make sense, and I was afraid of being misunderstood. Over the years, I learned to trust my inner voice and express it even if it's occasionally confusing to others.

Most of us go through life having intellectual conversations. I can tell you that there's a major difference in having an intellectual exchange with someone and having an in-the-moment experience with them. When you're lost in your own thinking, you're in the relationship as a spectator. You're observing what's happening. When you're in the moment, you become immersed in the relationship and become one; you become a participant. I tell people: "You have a choice. You can try to understand life or experience life, but you can't do both at the same time." As you improve on experiencing life, you're practicing the art of living in the moment. And you realize that anything else is just auditing life.

If you want to experience more joy and freedom, you'll have to spend less time thinking and more time taking action in the present moment. To spend more time being present will take practice and a commitment to be different.

How often do you audit what you are about to say or do? Do you view quiet time as a waste of time? How often do you discount your gut feelings and not take action? What do you love that you

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can begin to do without a need to justify or explain your actions? Doing what you love needs no explanation!

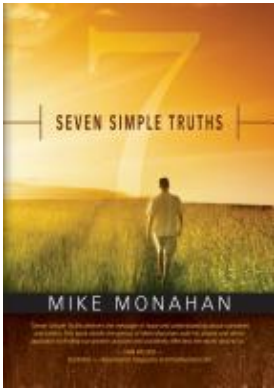
THE SHIFT

Simply put, the shift you'll make is from "human having" and "human doing" to "human being." A commitment to being in the moment means you will follow your heart and instincts more often. You'll begin to notice that your life starts to take on a new flow. You'll notice opportunities you never recognized before. You will spend more time doing what you love, and less time explaining and justifying why you are doing it. At first, you will notice the people around you will be uneasy with your new behavior; but eventually, it will become the norm. You will feel a real sense of being blessed while feeling humbled, realizing you may not be the reason for your success.

As you continue, you'll eventually find peace in all that you experience, no matter the difficulty of your experience. Joy comes from within through acceptance. As you go with the flow of life, it becomes easier. Belle, who was born to be a Field and Stream Bird Dog (FSBD), instinctively knows what to hunt—birds. Remember, you're not a human doing or human having, you're a human being Love and Be Loved (LABL). Just be and you, too, will instinctively know what to do. Relax. You can't get out of life alive, anyway, so enjoy the life you have.

*The fear of death follows from the fear of life.
A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.*

— MARK TWAIN



By reading Seven Simple Truths, you will be able to view your life from a different perspective. Some of the most important areas of life are not taught about in school or communicated clearly by parents. Many beliefs about what will make us happy, successful and loved are misdirected at their core. Through his wit, wisdom and insight, bestselling author Mike Monahan offers readers a fresh look at how to live a happier life.

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