

Missing Lisa: A Lesson In Presence

Guilty

I found myself guilty of a serious offense. I didn't understand the seriousness of this offense until I saw others doing it. There I was. In Paris. In the Louvre, arguably the finest art museum in the entire world. I stepped into the room where the legendary Mona Lisa is enshrined on her own wall, guarded behind bulletproof glass and a guard rail around her. This renaissance rock star even has bouncers. As I entered the room, eager to see perhaps the most famous painting in the world, I found leagues of people crowding all around her craning to get a glimpse of the famous painting. Then I noticed something strange. Nobody was looking at her. Not really. Everyone was looking at the view finder on their cameras. People would fire off 10 or so photos and then scurry off to some other masterpiece to do likewise. What for? To go home and document the art that they didn't really look at? The art they didn't take the time to connect with. The art they never really experienced?



Are you ever guilty of this: you are experiencing something extraordinary and your sense that it will end and the extraordinariness will be over. So what do we do? Like a thief, we try to take it. We want to own it somehow. So we try pull out our camera phone and take a shot and post it on Facebook or whatever. I'm the first to be guilty of this. But have you ever come back home and tried to show some innocent, unsuspecting person your photos? It goes like this: "Here's the Grand Canyon, only it's so much bigger than the picture suggests, and oh, you should see it. Here's the great restaurant we ate at, but oh you should taste the amazing food, this photo doesn't do it justice." Just as unsuspecting

observer's eyes start to glaze over and they start looking at their watch, telling you that they fear that they may have not cleaned the lint screen on the dryer and need to get home immediately, cuz if someone broke in and decided to do a load of laundry, it might catch fire, you decide you're going to holster the photos because they don't do the experience justice anyway. Besides, if you spend the entire time behind the lens of your camera to try to take the moment, to own it, you'll come home and realize that you're trying to remember something that you never really experienced in the first place. You were never really there. At least not present, anyway.

What to Do?

So never take photos, right? Never post anything on Facebook? No, that's dumb. Maybe try taking a photo and then put your camera away and then really try to experience it. And sometimes maybe try allowing yourself to simply experience it. Maybe sometimes even without the camera. Soak it up and experience it to the fullest. Be 100% there. Let your sense really open up to it. Smell it, breathe it, see it, feel it, taste it (although if you try to taste the Mona Lisa you better be prepared to lose your tongue. Besides, that salty bread is a vintage that is much to refined for my pallet.

What I'm getting at is that yoga helps us to practice this presence so that when we are in an extraordinary experience or even a seemingly mundane experience that with awareness could prove to be incredible, we are totally there, senses alive, ready to experience it. Like hanging with our kids, focusing on a project, experiencing a concert, or looking at the MONA LISA. Sometimes in a yoga class, I see the fidgets, the distant stares, and absent mindedness of someone whose mind is somewhere else. I want to say, come back. We've missed you. Be here, now. Be there later.

Sounds like Mr. Miyagi wisdom and probably is. But hey, that snitchy-snatcher can break boards with his forehead so that's gotta count for something. You can't do that while thinking about balancing your checkbook.



Photo by Alex Adams

Scott Moore is a senior teacher of yoga and mindfulness in the US (New York, Salt Lake City, LA) and abroad and the author of [Practical Yoga Nidra: The 10-Step Method to Reduce Stress, Improve Sleep, and Restore Your Spirit](#). When he's not teaching or conducting retreats, or traveling to teach, he also writes for Conscious Life News, Elephant Journal, Mantra Magazine, Medium, and his own [blog](#) at [scottmooreyoga.com](#). Scott also loves to run, play the saxophone, and travel with his wife and son. Check out his [yoga retreats and trainings in places like Tuscany, France, and Hong Kong](#), his [online Yoga Nidra Course](#) and his [Yoga Teacher Mentor Program](#). Scott just moved back to Salt Lake City after living in Southern France with his family.