

Hi everyone. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Zac and I use he and him pronouns. I'm a white 38-year-old male with long, medium brown hair. Today I am wearing a black shirt and gray rectangular glasses. Although it's not visible on my camera. I'm seated on a gray and black manual wheelchair. I live with both genetic and acquired disabilities. Although I've been disabled my whole life. I've only recently started identifying as disabled.

I think by now people are familiar with the concept of triggers. Triggers are something that bring up trauma or negative feelings for us. They can often be something very small like a facial expression or a sound.

Although triggers can seem small to others, they can bring up a big emotional reaction for the individual experiencing them. Triggers have an opposite. Many are less familiar with, which are called glimmers. Glimmers are small things in life that spark joy within us. The smile of a loved one, a bird song, a cool breeze on a hot day. Like triggers, glimmers, are very personal and may not be experienced by others to bring surges of joy.

Due to our mind's bias towards negativity, it's easy to filter glimmers out. We may momentarily register them, but we can quickly lose their memory in the chaos of our lives. Because they're seemingly insignificant at times, they can seem unimportant. But make sure not to miss them, because they're one of the keys to finding joy in life. Just like we can be feeling good and then be triggered into suffering, a glimmer can appear when we're in pain, when we're depressed or navigating illness. If we're able to savor and drink in these flashes of pleasure, we can retain them better and see the both/ and of our lives. Repetition changes, patterns of our brain. So the more we take them in, the more we open up to their presence.

You've likely heard the word "savor" used in a mindfulness context, but what does it mean? There's no one answer or strict rules. This is my own interpretation of what savoring is and how I bring it into my life and practice.

Savoring doesn't have to be a big, complex thing. It can be as simple as taking an extra moment to acknowledge the present feelings, let them sink in, and move on. Savoring can help us keep a little spark of joy alive within us, even during dark times. If we tend to this small spark and nurture it, it can give us some warmth.

Sometimes, that spark can grow into something much bigger and other times it just stays a spark. But keeping that spark alive, when we can, is really important.

Curiosity is one way to savor. When you notice a glimmer, you can think to yourself, "I know I'm enjoying this, what does that feel like in my body?" Or, "Why is it pleasing to me?" Savoring requires presence. So you can use savoring with mindfulness to explore a glimmer. In this sense, savoring is a type of meditation itself.

I'm not sure if anyone here has done a mindful eating exercise, but that's a great example of savoring. Mindful eating involves recognizing the miracle of your food. How it was grown, all the work that has gone into it, both by nature and by people. For example, you can think of all the people that were involved in the ingredients that came together in order for you to have this item in your hand, even a piece of fruit requires sun and rain. Someone to plant the seeds. Someone to pick the fruit and someone to deliver it to the store or farmer's market, just to name a few.

Once you've considered all of this, you can take in the experience of eating whatever it is with all five of your senses, taste, smell, texture, and even sound. This exercise helps us appreciate and examine everyday parts of our life.

There are many ways to spark glimmers. One I really enjoy is a meditation instruction from Thich Nhat Hanh. He suggest introducing a small half smile during your meditation. I often find this brings on a much larger smile. Or at least a sense of wellbeing inside me. He says, "Sometimes my joy is the source of my smile. Sometimes my smile is the source of my joy."

You can also try this at any time, not just when you're meditating. This isn't a way to cover up feeling unwell or when we're in emotional distress. But it can be a good support when we just need a little boost.

Another opportunity to savor is by finding a part of your daily routine you really enjoy and spending a bit more time on it. Examples could be your morning cup of coffee, while watching your favorite TV show, or petting your cat. Savoring leads us to gratitude. Appreciating the everyday aspects of life helps us enjoy ours more.

Savoring is a balancing act because while we want to take in the good, we also want to hold it lightly. Impermanence means that glimmers can't last. Grasping after a pleasurable experience can ironically lead to more suffering. So it's important to take it in without clinging to it.

I like to think about the relationship between savoring and impermanence like savoring a good dessert or a cup of coffee. These examples are helpful because firstly, we get a visual representation of how finite they are. We also get instant feedback of what happens when we grasp after them. One slice of cake can bring pleasure. While two slices might bring indigestion. One cup of coffee is joy, while two may give us jitters. So we enjoy it while it lasts and then move on.

Last time I talked, I discussed a practice called R.A.I.N. This acronym stands for Recognize, Allow, Investigate, and Nurture. It's used as a coping mechanism for when we're dealing with difficulty in our lives. R.A.I.N. works very well when we're dealing with dukkha, but I wanted to come up with a similar practice that would be more appropriate for dealing with enjoyable moments in life.

The practice I came up with is called RISE. R stands for Recognize I for Investigate. S is for Savor, and E is for Exhale. Exhale means that we can release the experience and not grasp onto it or crave more. Let's break these down a little bit further.

When we're feeling pleasure or joy, one of the first things we want to do is recognize its presence. I think that we can all relate to being in a bad mood and something pleasant happens and we have trouble even noticing it. Mindfulness is a really helpful tool for this. When we're being mindful, we can notice subtle shifts in our experience, everything is always changing.

Next, when we notice something pleasant, we can spend a little extra time investigating it and exploring what it means to experience something pleasant. Is it something more psychological that brings up thoughts or memories that we find enjoyable? Or maybe it's something physiological. Can we feel warmth, tingling, or expansion or some other enjoyable sensation? This will also help us recognize glimmers more quickly in the future.

In the savoring step, we let those feelings linger just a little while. If we focus on them, they might even grow. If not, that's okay. Just enjoy them in whatever way they present themselves. Savoring doesn't need to take a long time. We can spend even just a few extra seconds taking in a glimmer before moving to the last step.

Lastly, we exhale. This can be a literal releasing of our breath, but it can also be just letting go of the experience and letting it move through us. Enjoyable experiences can't last forever,

although from one perspective that's frustrating, part of what makes them enjoyable is that they're not always with us. If we were to experience pleasure all the time, it would get boring and we'd have to find new levels of pleasure, always chasing after new novel experiences that spark our joy.

I'd like to close with a poem. This poem is titled Latent by Rosemary Wahtola Trommer.

Riding our bikes through the warm summer night,
the dark itself parted to let us pass;
wind in our hair, soft whir of the wheels
and an almost irrational joy grew in me then
such simple joy as if it were always here,
waiting to flourish, needing only to be noticed.

And is joy latent in everything?
I have felt it sometimes in the washing
of dishes, in the mowing the lawn,
in peeling the carrots even washing
the fish tank and scrubbing the floor.

So could it be too inside worried pacing?
In envy? In sighing? In the clenching of fists?
Is there joy where I can't imagine it?
Joy-- waiting to spin like a wheel,
waiting to rise, like laughter
that careens through the deepening dark.