

# Now: An unrepeatable miracle

**Grab it, exhaust it, drain it, until there's nothing left**

Now is a miracle! It's also unrepeatable. But most people spend 58 minutes of every hour living somewhere other than right here, right now. They look backwards and live in the past, regretting lost joys and feeling guilt for things done badly—both of which are useless and debilitating activities. Or, they live in the future, which they either long for or dread. In doing so, they miss the miracle of NOW—this minute!

How about you? Missed any miracles lately?

Did you decide not to go swimming, even though you were at the beach, because you just had your hair done?

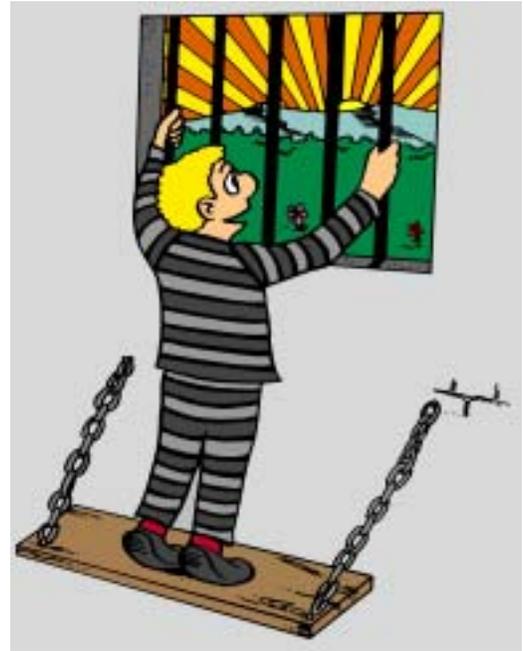
Did you buy the conservative navy-blue tie rather than the more debonair salmon-colored one because the navy wouldn't show stains?

Did you stay off the dance floor even when the band played your favorite song just because no other couples were dancing?

Did you pout and make it a miserable day for yourself because your presentation at the staff meeting didn't go as well as you hoped?

Did you tell your kids, "Later, I'm busy," and continue brooding about that huge repair bill when they asked you to play with them?

We've all made mistakes like these and failed to live fully when we had the chance. But berating ourselves for it is also a waste of time. Far better to just grab the next moment before we miss that too! And when you grab it, hang on. Exhaust it. Drain it of its juices. Don't give



it back until there's nothing left. Otherwise you might create your own version of a very sad story about a young man who was about to be executed for a crime.

At dawn on the day of his execution he stood on the bench in his prison cell, reached for the iron bars across the window and pulled himself up so he could see the countryside. It was spring, and as the sun edged above the horizon he saw his world as if for the first time. He was startled by the brilliant colors of the flowers as they were illuminated by the sunlight. He noticed the lushness of the fields, the rich smell of the freshly tilled soil, and the pleasant sounds of the town stirring to life.

Straining to hold himself up to the window, he continued to stare wide-eyed. Tears rolled down his cheeks. He knew he had missed this miracle countless times before and would no longer be alive to appreciate it. When the jailers came to lead him to the gallows, he was still clinging to the window with all his might, in awe of the sunrise on this spring day. They had to pull him down and drag him away.

The wonder of life had always been there, but he had been preoccupied with regret for the



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past and dread of the future. Facing death became even more difficult for him now that he realized he had never really lived!

**Here's what you can do:**

1. Spend a few more minutes of every hour fully living the unrepeatable miracle that is NOW.
2. Work at your work, play at your play, shed your tears, enjoy your laughter. NOW is the time of your life.
3. Avoid looking back or thinking too far ahead—NOW is the time to focus on.

4. See things in perspective...
  - dive into that ocean and forget your hair
  - buy that special tie, dress or outfit
  - dance to your song and ignore others
  - forget the disappointing presentation you made ... just improve the next one
  - take time with each of your children if you have them. From the day they are born, you have only 18 summers before they're grown and gone. Think of it! Spend time with them NOW and see the miracle daily!

# Parent effectiveness training

**Listen actively—it will encourage your children to communicate with you**

Imagine you are the parent of a young child in elementary school. Your child comes home and says, "I sure got stuck with a rotten teacher this year. What a grouch! I hate her, and I hate school." How would you respond?

According to *Parent Effectiveness Training*, your response would probably fall into one of the "Typical Twelve" basic categories used by most parents. You might say something like, "Don't talk that way about your teacher," or "You know you never should hate anyone," or "You'll just have to learn to get along with all kinds of teachers."

But these "Typical Twelve" responses usually carry implied judgments about the child which are not only disparaging, but actually cause defensiveness and tend to cut off further communication between you.

*Parent Effectiveness Training* offers a solution! One you can apply with your children, your spouse, even your boss, employees or business associates. It's called "Active Listening," and simply requires that the listener find a way to *really understand* what the sender is *feeling*. The listener then puts his understanding of that *feeling* into words, and feeds it back to the sender for verification. The listener does *not* send a message of his own, such as advice, an opinion, an evaluation or a question. Instead, he feeds back *only* the *feeling* he thinks the sender is expressing!

For instance, in response to the child's complaint about his teacher, an active listener might say, "Sounds like you're really frustrated with your teacher." Or, "Sounds like you're pretty fed up with school today." Usually the child will then say something like, "I sure am," and continue explaining and, eventually, unraveling **more** of his feelings. This process of unraveling leads the child to the point of finding his own solution to the problem! At first you might feel active listening is unnatural, that people "just don't talk that way." But it does become more comfortable with use, and the results are well worth the effort.

Children who are fortunate enough to communicate with active listeners develop higher self-esteem, and more importantly, learn how to take responsibility for finding solutions to their own problems. They actually become freed of their troublesome feelings when they are encouraged to express them openly. And perhaps best of all, active listening fosters a very warm, trusting relationship between you and your child.

**Here's what you can do:**

Develop the skill of "active listening." You'll find it of tremendous value in building rapport in all of your relationships—but especially with your children. To order a special audiocassette program on *Parent Effectiveness* call our office TOLL FREE at 1-800-852-8572.

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# Marriage encounter

**Joel, do you have any suggestions on how I can improve my marriage?**

Yes, a wonderful opportunity is available to you and your spouse to improve and enrich your marriage relationship. It's called Marriage Encounter, and all it takes is a weekend of your time.

If you're single and you plan to marry someday, save this article till then. If you're married but not sure that you'll STAY married, take action quickly—within 24 hours. Call the number or write to the address at the end of this article.

## **What is Marriage Encounter?**

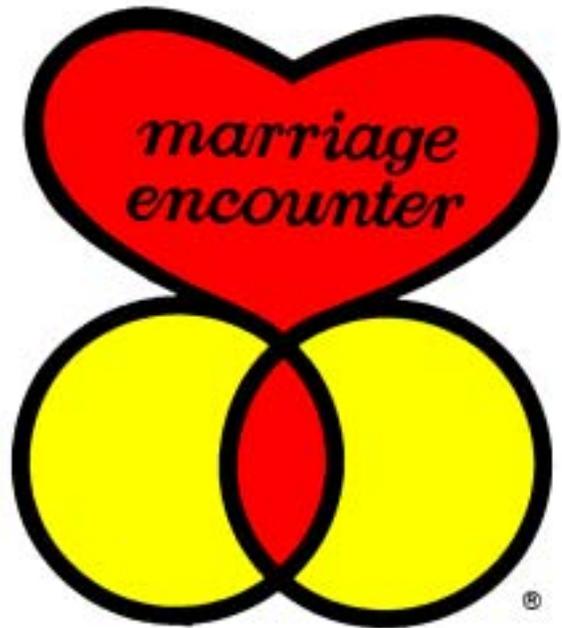
It's a program designed to give married couples the opportunity to really examine their lives together—with its weaknesses and strong points, their attitudes toward each other, their hurts, desires, ambitions, disappointments, joys and frustrations—and to do so **privately** in a face-to-face, heart-to-heart encounter with the one person they have chosen to live with the rest of their life.

The emphasis of the Marriage Encounter is on open and honest communication between husband and wife. You'll spend a weekend together, away from the children and the distractions and tensions of everyday life, to concentrate on each other and share your deepest thoughts.

It is not a retreat, not a marriage clinic. It is "couple dynamics," not group dynamics. What happens, happens only between you and your spouse in private. It's a unique approach aimed at revitalizing your marriage by helping you as a couple see what your union *could* be, and, indeed, *should* be. You share your feelings only with your spouse, not with the group. Nothing personal is revealed to anyone else.

## **Who is Marriage Encounter for?**

Marriage Encounter is for those couples who have a good thing going for them and want to make it better! And any marriage can be improved, no matter how good. In fact, Judy and I had been happily married almost 22 years when we discovered Marriage Encounter. We had always rated our marriage a "10," but as a result of our Encounter weekend, we decided our marriage was only a "9," and since then, we've worked on improving it!



## **What happens at a Marriage Encounter?**

Through a series of ideas and questions presented by a team of clergy and volunteer couples, you're given an opportunity to look at yourself and your life—to look at your marriage and your relationship to each other, to your family, and to the world.

But the Marriage Encounter does not end with the weekend. You and your spouse will have the tools to continually grow closer together, to live more joyful lives.

Yes, Marriage Encounter is for good marriages! In fact, a good marriage especially deserves the inspiration and renewal of a Marriage Encounter. Judy and I will celebrate our 42nd Anniversary this year!

## **Here's what you can do:**

To find out more about Marriage Encounter in your local area, you can contact almost any denomination in your community. Most clergy will be familiar with a local contact person. Or, you can write, call or visit them on the Web:

Worldwide Marriage Encounter, Inc.  
2210 E. Highland Ave., #106  
San Bernardino, CA 92404  
(909)863-9963

<http://www.wwme.org>

# Self-discipline

## What it takes to be a winner

Are you self-disciplined? How would you rate your ability to discipline yourself? Average? Outstanding? Or are you undisciplined?

Of the qualities necessary for achievement, self-discipline ranks at the top of the list. It's doing what needs to be done, *when* it needs to be done, without someone telling you to do it!

A self-disciplined person is the student who studies without having to be prodded by parents or teachers. It's the employee who, rather than procrastinate, begins a project as soon as it's given to him. It's the salesperson who makes one more call even though he/she's already worked a full day. It's the manager who commits himself and his team to attaining a lofty goal instead of a mediocre one, even though the mediocre goal would be acceptable to the company bosses. Self-disciplined people tend to ...

- get up early
- exercise regularly
- abide by their self-prescribed diets, even when alone
- do whatever they say they'll do, often considerably more
- work toward pleasing results, without being sidetracked by pleasing activities
- set goals, then achieve them on time

An example of self-discipline is actor Hal Holbrook, who for over 30 years portrayed Mark Twain in live shows for more than 1800 audiences. It was his self-discipline that enabled him to spend four hours meticulously applying his own makeup before each performance. It was his self-discipline that kept him critiquing his performances and recording those critiques in a journal each night after the curtain closed—no matter how exhausted he was. And thus it was his self-discipline that made him wealthy and famous.

Another self-disciplined person—professional golfer Jack Nicklaus. When asked what he thought it took to be a winner, Nicklaus didn't



mention athletic ability, proper training or even luck. His answer was, "*The self-discipline to practice.*"

If the television camera crews had followed Nicklaus after each tournament, you wouldn't have seen him go home, visit the clubhouse bar, or stop and relax at the nearest spa. You'd see him head straight for the driving range and begin practicing shots he hit poorly during the previous round. When he was satisfied with his ability to hit those, he would practice the shots he *didn't* hit during the previous round. Then, when he was again satisfied with his performance, he would practice his entire repertoire—*every* shot—until he was hitting each one perfectly! *That's* self-discipline.

And that's what it takes to be a winner!

## Here's what you can do:

1. *Don't just think about it, plan it, or talk about it. DO IT!*
2. *Stop looking for an easy way. If your goal is worthwhile, there are no easy ways to attain it. You'll have to work hard, and to do that you'll have to discipline yourself.*
3. *You can strengthen your self-discipline by recording all your victories over laziness, procrastination and fear. Then, each time you review these, you'll be reminded of what a self-disciplined person you really are.*

