

## Gail Rink: Living in the Moment

Retirement is a great time to relax, but an even better time to reflect

By Gail Rink | Published on 04.02.2009



I have been officially retired now for three months. Retirement is wonderful — a time finally to live at my own pace. I know my family and friends worried I would not have enough to keep me busy. However, they underestimated my love for being at home and my joy of futzing. Days spent at the [YMCA](#), entertaining, reading a book all day, and traveling midweek are all pleasures of retirement. Time is a new commodity in my life. I practice living in the moment. Living in the moment means you are totally immersed in an experience. Easier said than done.

My experiences with [Hospice of Santa Barbara](#) serve me well, remembering patients who lived in the moment naturally and those forced to live in the moment because symptoms demanded it. Grieving people experience living in the moment painfully. The physical absence and the

permanency of death are painful adjustments for family members. Our human tendency is to avoid painful feelings ... grief, however, requires us to walk through the pain of sorrow.

Think back on the events in your life that you vividly remember. Those are the events where you were living in the moment ...

My hospice moments are rich with examples of patients and family members living in their memories. Some have memories of suffering, some have memories of deep guilt, and some have only positive recollections. The point is, however, that memories happened in the past and, if you're still invested in the negativity of that memory — still holding on to the anger, guilt, remorse or the hurt — your energy isn't available for living now.

Lately I have been thinking about my father. He died in 1970 at age 57. He didn't live long enough to retire, although he worried about retirement most of my life. Dad believed in a strong work ethic; he opened and closed the drugstore seven days a week. He saved his money and argued often with Mother about spending frivolously. Every summer we spent two weeks at our cottage in Canada. Dad loved Maple Lake. He fished, swam and enjoyed the time with my brother and me. The day after Labor Day he returned to work at the drugstore. I wonder if he lived in the moment when he was fishing? I doubt he did at the drugstore; he was distracted by his own work ethic. Work to retire. Sad. He would have enjoyed retirement.

— *Gail Rink, MSW, is the former executive director of [Hospice of Santa Barbara](#).*