

How to slow down your life and enjoy the ride

By Steve Gilliland

It's finally Friday night, the beginning of a weekend of freedom, which also happens to include your birthday. Your family, friends and spouse all have celebratory plans for you.

You have a rewarding career and a network of beautiful people who want to rejoice in your life. As you walk out to your car to officially kickoff the fun, a giddy thrill washes over you.

But as you click the seatbelt into place, rather than sitting in awe of how lucky you are, a list of concerns begin worming their way into your consciousness: "I need gas, but the conveniently located gas station charges more than others ... I hope it's not a surprise party ... Maybe I should get the beverages I like before going home ... I haven't been to the gym all week ... Did I pay the electric bill?"

And so it goes.

I think we've all had this experience, which often has us psychically living 30 minutes into the future – no matter how great the present circumstances might be.

Are we doomed to this torrent of noise which distracts us from enjoying our life? We don't have to be.

- Don't live your life 30 minutes ahead of the present. If you won't live your life now, in the present, then who will?

An older man came up to me, grabbed my hand, and said he wished he'd heard me speak decades ago. After I asked why, he said that when he was eating lunch on break or dinner with his family, he was always thinking about what he had to do after the meal, which represented his daily life. "At the age of

97," he said, "I've officially lived my life 30 minutes ahead" – 30 minutes ahead of whatever he was doing at the moment.

- Laugh more. It's better than crying before you're hurt. Don't put your umbrella up until it rains. Worry restricts your ability to think and act effectively, and it forces you to mortgage fear and anxiety about something that may never occur. Laughter is the opposite. When you laugh, you're living almost completely in the moment, and it's one of the best feelings you can have.

- No one can ruin your day without your permission. As much as we cannot control in life – our genes, our past and what has led up to today – there is much control we may take upon ourselves. Today, for example, we can understand that life picks on everyone, so when the going gets tough, we don't have to take it personally. When we do take misfortune personally, we tend to obsess, giving a legacy to something that may make you a day poorer in life.

- Cure your destination disease. Live more for today, less for tomorrow, and never about yesterday. How? You might have to repeatedly remind yourself that yesterday is gone forever, yet we perpetually have to deal with now, so why not live it? And what if tomorrow never occurs? There is a difference between working toward the future, which is inherently enjoyable in light of hope, and living in an unrealistic future that remains perpetually elusive. If tomorrow never comes, would you be satisfied with the way today ended?

It is not how you start in life and it is not how you finish. The true joy of life is in the trip, so enjoy the ride.

Steve Gilliland is a member of the National Speaker Association's Speaker Hall of Fame. He shows audiences how to open doors to success in their careers, their relationships and their lives.