

# Delayed Gratification and the Next Life

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Life has taught me the benefits and the joy of delaying enjoying the rewards of my efforts. Combined with a sense of organization, my life has been very fulfilling lately. Though I have to admit that it was not always like this and I had to learn it by trial and error.

Now it has become my second nature. If I receive a message or an email, I reply right away so that later I can enjoy my time, knowing that I have no unfinished work. It does not mean that I don't have pending matters, but I know that I want to do them in a timely manner.

For those who are not familiar with the concept, here are a few descriptions of delayed gratification:

Delayed gratification refers to the ability to put off something mildly fun or pleasurable now, to gain something that is more fun, pleasurable, or rewarding later. For example, you could watch TV the night before an exam, or you could practice delayed gratification and study for the exam.

**“The ability to discipline yourself to delay gratification in the short term in order to enjoy greater rewards in the long term, is the indispensable prerequisite for success.”** – Brian Tracy

It is human nature to enjoy the rewards of our efforts, and there is nothing wrong with that, but there is a problem with instant gratification, rewarding oneself right after half of the work is done and often before the job is finished. In extreme cases, one rewards oneself even before the work is started.

Instant gratification indicates a lack of self-discipline and self-control, an absence of purpose in one's life and the ability to set goals.

**“Without delayed gratification, there is no self-control.”** -Sunday Adelaja

Someone who practices delayed gratification demonstrates a well-defined purpose in life and the need for goals. That person is aware that life's journey is a long one, and therefore, he does not reward himself before the goal is thoroughly accomplished.

As I was thinking about how much I enjoy my quality time after doing everything on my to-do list for the day, a realization grabbed me, and as the saying goes, "the light came on." I just realized that our life with all its complications is but a massive exercise in delayed gratification.

Our comfort and progress in the next world depend on sacrificing many human desires and our will for the will of our Creator so that we can enjoy our journey, fully aware that we delayed receiving the rewards of this physical world for the next life.

This process in my estimation is the greatest delayed gratification one can imagine. The spiritual reward for preparing for the next life and not settling for the distractions of the material world is an example of delayed gratification. The spiritual gratification in the next world is beyond our human comprehension.

The Baha'i teachings are a constant reminder about the transitory of this world and focusing our thoughts and actions towards preparation for the next world.

**“Therefore in this world, he must prepare himself for life beyond. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom must be obtained here. Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so likewise the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world.”**

– Abdul-Baha, *Foundations of World Unity* p. 63.

We spend our lives doing things to get rewards. We sacrifice mental and physical energy to earn money so that we can acquire the things we want, and possibly we spend it without much thought for the future. Only a small percentage of people save money so that it accumulates until the time when they can exchange it for the things they desire the most.

Saving money or having retirement money in the form of pension are examples of delayed gratification. If we do not spend money now and save it so that we can enjoy it later when we need it more, we are practicing delayed gratification. We have less income today so that when we are retired, we have an income without working.

No reward or gratification is greater than entering the next world with a clear conscience, knowing that spiritually we have exerted the spiritual energy to sustain us in the worlds to come.

**“Know thou that the Kingdom is the real world, and this nether place is only its shadow stretching out. A shadow hath no life of its own; its existence is only a fantasy, and nothing more; it is but images reflected in water, and seeming as pictures to the eye.”** – Abdu'l-

Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 178.

From the moment that we were born, it was understood that we will die sooner or later and this world was merely a short stopover in the long journey of our soul who will eventually attain the presence of our Creator. Just a brief stopover in this transitory world of matter to obtain supplies for our soul so that we can continue on with our journey. When we forget our goal, we need reminders.

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