

Living in the Now: Planning for the Future

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

There are so many times when we have to plan for the future. Marriages have to be organised; children's schooling has to be sorted; and always the shopping list and the shopping – and what will I do when I retire. How can we live in the here and now, if we are forever planning a future? Future planned events impact upon the present. You wouldn't be getting up so early but for the budget flight at an ungodly hour that happens to go to the place we've decided to visit - Acapulco. For this to have materialised there was a time in the past when the initial idea came to mind. Perhaps it grew from a love of Mexican art - you really want to see those murals by Diego Rivera. And you are interested in Mexican food. And there are miles of beaches and the possibility of scuba-diving in sea laced with tropical fish, shipwrecks and even an underwater statue of the Virgin! The idea, laced with desire as such ideas usually are, soon evolved into a plan. Information was gathered. Decisions were made and the flight was booked. But we did not let desire confound us into a daydream. We have good purpose to go there – to appreciate the art, the food, the sea. Let's take different tack. Leafing through a magazine, there's an advert for Acapulco. There it is, everything dreamed of. Beautiful bodies on the beach soaking up the sun, glitzy nightlife, gorgeous restaurants, dancing till dawn. The adventure, the food, the romance. Waking out of the reverie, the tea has gone cold. No matter, Acapulco it is. The first planning was realistic and purposeful. The second, ungrounded, pie in the sky. The first should allow us to land with an open mind, exploring what has to be discovered. The second is mired in expectation. When we get there it rains, there's a nationwide strike and no-one turns up remotely attractive. The first returns you home contented with the fruit of open-minded experience. The second dumps you back home disappointed, disconsolate and that awful feeling of having wasted hard earned money. The first planning was living in the now, planning for the future. The second was, while planning, living in a daydream and on arrival unable to live in the here and now!

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