

Living in the Here and Now

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

It is a cliché: live in the here and now. But then a burglar in the dead of night stealing around your home is definitely living in the here and now. But the awareness that will lead to liberation has also to be ethical – ethical in the widest sense of that term of wholesome relationship. Otherwise, it is not Right Awareness. When can we tell some unwholesome desire has entered a situation? Here are some pointers.

Reading: there may be times we have to read and skim to collect facts for a piece of work, but is that what we are doing all the time – collecting facts and figures. If you speed read, is it just to collect data. Are we tense or relaxed? Are we in fact hoarding knowledge? When finished, does it feel nourishing or just gratifying? Or do we find ourselves reading slowly, carefully, stopping occasionally to re-read, savouring phrases, mulling over what has been written. Do we understand more deeply? Do we feel nourished?

In conversation: are we inwardly answering while the other is speaking? Do we always want to be ready with a reply – agreeing, disagreeing. Do we interrupt? When we have finished, do we feel we have won? Do we feel bad if the conversation didn't go our way? Are we too afraid our view might be changed or even wrong? Or do we let go of our opinions and listen. Are we ready to see the way the other sees and understands and perhaps have our views challenged, nuanced, even changed?

Doing chores: are they chores? Do we just want to get them done so we get on? Or do we see them as an opportunity to develop care and attention. Do we find repetition a bore or does the ever-busy mind rest on the activity and the heart find a gentle joy? Do we delight in washing pots? Do we find the toilet pan a beautiful object to carefully clean?

Work: If boredom comes up at work, do we bring energy, focus, refinement to what we are doing, or do find ourselves restless, seeking distraction, day dreaming ... getting a cup of tea. We work to earn a living. Do we see it as a service or is it just 'work' so we can get things and have 'experiences'? Do we seek promotion to get more money, status and power or do we see it as a way of offering our skills for the benefit of the company or society?

Relationships: are we more concerned to be liked, to be loved rather than admire and love? Are we more concerned to be consoled than to console? To be understood than to understand? No other, whatever the relationship, is ever kind and considerate all the time. When we are hurt, do we hold onto the resentment? Or are we open about it and ready to let go? When we hurt the other, are we quick to apologise? Or do we justify our actions? Is there revenge in our hurting? When discussing what to do, do we come with a fixed idea and get upset if the other doesn't want to do it? Or do we come with an idea we are happy to put aside?

Our hearts are normally combining self-driven, unskilful desires with wholesome, virtuous intentions. Our spiritual work is to empower those right intentions and not get embroiled in wrong intentions. In this way we are developing Right Attitude, the second step on the Eightfold Path.

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