

10 September 2017

Being Hopelessly Alive



Where do you hope your life will go? Why do you want it to go anywhere?

Humans have the ability to imagine almost without limit, including imagining things and places. It allows me to ‘pretend’ that I am somewhere other than where my physical body is right now; it allows me to hope that I can escape from the place where I am sitting, at this moment in the present.

With my mind firmly attached to where I hope I will end up, I am no longer aware what my feet are treading on. I am not present where I am because I am hopeful of reaching my destination. I can ‘see’ it, ‘taste’ it. It is as if I am already there. So, why should I even continue my journey, as I have already experienced it, albeit in my imagination?

I continue travelling and reach my destination. How did I get here? I can barely remember. I seem to have lost an hour (or two or three) of my life. But I am here now, where I intended to be. However, I am already thinking ahead to where I will be and what I will be doing when I have finished what I came *here* for. When I leave for my next destination, I have already forgotten much of my experience here.

My life seems to be taken up with hope after hope and the spaces in between. Those spaces are spaces in my life, in my experience. I don’t remember the sunlit piles of clouds over the nearby hills. I didn’t see the dead fox on the side of the road. I have forgotten what the two people were talking about on the radio. I don’t remember what the dog said to me – oh, no, that was my son telling about his school outing

How much of my life have I missed through being over *there* instead of *here*? What has being hopeful cost me?

I have experienced driving to a place I wanted to be and lost any awareness of the driving process. I ended up somewhere else and had no idea how I got there. If a participant in, say, a hockey game fails to pay attention to the players around her, focussing only on the goal, she is unlikely to get anywhere near the goal.

What I’m suggesting is, have a goal and then pay attention to the path you are on right now. Be on the spot, in that time completely – here and now –and then be on your journey. Stay mindful at each step where and when you are. Be aware of your thoughts and feelings in order to be able to respond to them. This response may involve a change of direction, even a change of goal.

Some coaches (sports and personal) will tell you to always keep your eyes on the goal. This is a formula for stumbles and falls. If you come to an obstacle, even a ‘brick wall’, it is the here and now that is important, not the there and then.

Suggesting that you be hopelessly alive, I am not advocating despair. That is a totally different state. I am suggesting that hope takes your attention away from mindfulness. Practising mindfulness can lead to a richer experience of life and, therefore, a richer life.

By all means have goals and aspirations, but don't have them control your life. Use them to give direction to your journey and have the journey be your experience. Don't let hope have you be 'there' when you are actually 'here'. You will be truly more alive.