

## A SHOT OF HOPE THE SPEAKING TREE

# Contemplating The Future Without Fear

*THICH NHAT HANH*

Many of us spend a lot of our time acting out of fear of the past or the present, and in doing that, we affect each other and the larger society. We create a culture of fear. When fear comes up and we're upset and worried, the first thing we need to do is acknowledge that fear. We can recognise and embrace it rather than acting it out.

Our original fear isn't just from our own birth and childhood; the fear we feel comes from both our own and our ancestors' original fear. Our ancestors suffered from hunger and other dangers, and there were moments when they were extremely anxious. That kind of fear has been transmitted to us; every one of us has that fear inside. And because we suffer from that fear, we make the situation worse.

We worry about our safety, our job, and our family. We worry about external threats. Even when nothing bad is happening, that doesn't prevent us from feeling fear.

However, we can prepare for the future without getting consumed by our plans. Often, we either don't plan at all, or we get caught up in obsessive planning because we fear the future and its uncertainty. The present moment is where we need to operate. When you are truly anchored in the present moment, you can plan in a much better way. It means that you know there's no use losing yourself in worries and fear concerning the future. If you are grounded in the present moment, you can bring the future into the present to have a deep look without losing yourself in anxiety and uncertainty. If you are truly present and know how to take care of the present moment as best you can, you are doing your best for the future already.

The same is true about the past. The teaching and practice of mindfulness do not forbid looking deeply into the past. But if we allow ourselves to drown in regret and sorrow concerning the past, that's not right mindfulness. If we're well established in the present moment, we can bring the past back to the present moment and have a deep look. You can very well examine the past and the future while you are established in the present moment. In fact, you

can learn from the past and plan for the future in the best way if you are grounded in the present moment.

Sometimes it's tempting to ridicule the fear of others because it reminds us of our own fear. We have been taught to keep our fear out of sight and unacknowledged.

How can we let go of fear and relinquish the anger and violence in us? We must listen deeply and learn to practice the way the Buddha practised letting go of his own fear and violence. Practising mindfulness of fear and looking deeply into its origin provide the answer. (Ahimsa Trust represents Thich Nhat Hanh in India. For online Mindfulness Meditation practice sessions, visit [www.ahimsatrust.org](http://www.ahimsatrust.org))



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