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Future or Present?

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Is It Better to Be Future-Oriented or Present-Oriented?

People with anxiety often tend to project themselves into the future and those of us who are socially anxious make no exception to this rule. But why is that a bad thing? Shouldn't we be concerned about our future?

Deciding whether being concerned with the future is positive or negative, mainly depends on what you mean by 'concerned'. If it means constant worrying, then being future-oriented might have a bad connotation for you. In this case, should we be more present-oriented? After all, life happens here and now. The present is tangible while the future is not. But if we focus mainly on the present, how can we plan ahead for the future? The truth, as always, is somewhere in the middle. In this article, we're going to explore the pros and cons of being present-oriented and future-oriented.

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Being Future-Oriented

Being a future-oriented person allows you to plan ahead. Since planning is a crucial part of every project, focusing on the future clearly helps you in achieving your goals. You can mentally visualize every step of the process, predict possible obstacles and envision your success. But what happens when things don't go as planned. Would you be able to adapt and

move forward? That's where it gets tricky for people who deal with anxiety. Oftentimes, they're excellent planners and thinkers, but poor 'doers'. This is one of the reasons why our social anxiety plan is focused not only on mental change, but also on behavioral change.

Give Yourself a Boost!

Visualizing themselves as winners is definitely something that future-oriented people are capable of doing. This can give you that extra dose of optimism that you need, in order to push through with your projects. Unfortunately, it can go both ways because there are people who, although they're future-oriented, cannot imagine themselves as winners. They look at the future and all they see is failure and disappointment. In addition to that, if you're dealing with social anxiety you probably tend to worry about the future a lot. In this case, you definitely need a healthy dose of 'here and now'.

Being Present-Oriented

You've probably heard people talking about being 'here and now' and enjoying the present. Being present-oriented is definitely an amazing experience because it allows you to fully enjoy the moment. People with social anxiety are often encouraged to live in the present. They have to leave aside the worrying future and simply live.

The Downside of Living "Now"

But what is the downside of being present-oriented? Well, if you live in the present for too long, you become a hedonist. You live only to seek pleasure and immediate gratification. For someone who's constantly living in the present, the future might be 'foggy' and obscure. The lack of perspective or future plans doesn't bother them because they're only interested in one thing - immediate pleasure.

Is Being Present-Oriented the Cure for Anxiety?

Although it might relieve you of the tension caused by worrying, the present-oriented lifestyle can't eliminate all the negative effects of anxiety. For instance, you'll continue to have a poor social performance because being in the present doesn't mean that you'll magically gain social skills or become less clumsy. The physical signs of social anxiety don't just disappear. You'll still experience social anxiety, the only difference is that you'll probably be less worried about the future.

Finding 'the Middle Ground'

Since both perspectives are good and bad at the same time, what's the alternative? The best thing you can do is pick 'the good' out of each perspective. You can do this by simply focusing on the context, the nature of an event. For example, if you receive good news, be happy. Put aside your troubles and enjoy this wonderful moment. When your boss assigns you a task, put aside the present and focus on how you're going to complete the job (future). It's all about shifting your time perspective, depending on the context and the nature of the event. You can be both present and future-oriented as long as you know when to use each perspective.

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