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The Importance of Living in the Now

Whenever someone asks me “where do you see yourself in ten years?” or “what are your plans for the future?” I tell them I have absolutely no idea. And it's true, I haven't the slightest inkling of what my future holds...but then again, who does? The future is unpredictable and uncontrollable, regardless of the countless plans we make, and ideas we have; nothing nor nobody can control the future. It's an unforeseeable force, a whimsical distant fantasy, a false reality that we fill with our hopes, dreams, and aspirations in life that we can't wait to reach. But life is a rollercoaster; a mountainous landscape filled with peaks and valleys that we all inevitably have to cross. Our plans and predictions for our futures are interrupted by the natural course of life. With that being said, we often forget that our lives — our futures — are completely and utterly out of our hands. We are so focused on planning for the future that we forget to live in the now; enjoy the beauty of growing up, appreciate the highs and the lows, absorb the resources of the world. Thus, the future is essentially a rhetorical idea. So, where do I see myself in ten years? What are my plans for the future? Only time will tell.

Life seems to move slower when we're younger and faster as we age. It's dynamic; one moment it feels like it's moving at warp speed and dragging during others. Growing up, I was oblivious to anything other than the current state of my life; I had no awareness regarding the

concept of the future — I doubt any child between the ages of three and eight or ten really does. During those younger years of my life, all I knew how to do was live in the moment, simply because of my lack of experience and knowledge. Ignorance is bliss, right? It wasn't until I reached my freshman year of high school that I stopped being able to savor the current moments and began obsessing over creating the perfect future for myself. At the time, I had been rowing for about three years; the team was small and we weren't very well known. However, things started to change when we became more successful, and I started watching my friends be recruited to some of the top schools in the country, including the Ivy League. Being exposed to the college recruitment culture so young changed my outlook on life; at only thirteen years old, it became my dream to be recruited to the best college possible. Thus began my obsession with crafting my “perfect” future. I lost sight of all of the little things that brought me joy in life and focused solely on my rowing career. My thoughts were only about rowing and school: “I need to perform perfectly at practice today” or “If I don't have a 4.0 GPA by the end of this semester I will never be recruited”. I still loved rowing, it was my passion, but I failed to enjoy my love of the sport and instead was overwhelmed with stress due to my own thoughts. My obsession with crafting my perfect future continued throughout the rest of my high school years, everything I did was a variable in my plan for my future. I even transferred schools halfway through high school in an effort to better my chances of being recruited. Little did I know that doing so would allow me to regain my awareness and appreciation of living in the present moment.

Transferring to Holy Child was a last minute decision, I wanted a better education in order to appeal to college coaches and decided to transfer for my last two years of high school. Historically, I had never been one to enjoy school, I dreaded everything about school and I spent

my time keeping my head down, avoiding any social interactions, and getting my work done. However, something about the Holy Child community changed my outlook and my involvement in school. I enjoyed classes, I made friends, and I even participated in many school events — all huge milestones for me. Being in such an environment finally allowed me to realize that there was more to life than where I would go to college. Slowly but surely, I let go of the lofty expectations I placed on myself. I became in touch with my emotions, I recognized what made me happy and what didn't, and I started listening to those thoughts and feelings. I stopped planning my future and allowed my life to play out as the universe intended it to. I channeled my inner, younger self. Yes, ignorance is bliss.

We generally have some sort of vision for where we want to go and what we want to do, but we need to take ownership of where we currently are. We can't allow ourselves to neglect the present. With that being said, I regret not taking the time to fully enjoy where I currently was or to savor the moment. However, I now realize that one of the major causes of unhappiness is to not appreciate what we already have. As we get older, some of our most precious assets will be the memories that we have created throughout the course of our lives. As cliché as it sounds, there is no better time to start living life to the fullest than right in this moment. Choosing not to live our lives to the fullest extent and be present may just become one of our biggest regrets. So, looking back on the entirety of my high school career, the most significant piece of information I learned is not integration in calculus class, nor the instability of our current political culture in AP Government... it is the importance of living in the now.