



## Welcoming the Future with Grace

Like many people, I'm a yoga practitioner. Yoga brings flexibility to my body, my mind, *and* my attitude. One example is living without anticipation. In a yoga class, that might mean sitting cross-legged, hands in a *mudra* (a hand gesture used during meditation), calming the breath, and clearing the mind. More actively, it may mean holding an *asana* (pose or posture) without worrying about what comes next. My yoga teacher frequently asks us to stop anticipating the next pose and simply be in the moment. For those of us who are what I call "forward thinking," that takes practice. Patience, grasshopper.

My teacher also encourages us to take our practice off the mat and live our yoga in the world. It's one thing to practice tree pose while waiting in line at Bloomingfoods. It's something else to throw anticipation out the window.

The world is a dangerous place without some anticipation, whether we're thinking about the next footfall on the stairs, the next intersection while we're driving, or the next encounter we might have with a stray dog while on a run. And in many ways, anticipation is a positive emotion. We often anticipate happy events—reunions with loved ones, vacations, holidays.

But being a future-focused person, someone who anticipates, is not without its down side. I like my life to have a plan, and without one I feel lost.

The times my life plan has fallen apart—due to the death of a loved one, a job loss, a move—I have been absolutely miserable until, once again, I regained a sense of control. But, honestly, it's only a *sense* of control—and it only lasts until the next misfortune causes my life to veer off course.

I'm still working through this, but I'm starting to see that applying my yoga practice to my life—not just the mudras and asanas but the deeper lessons—might help mitigate that out-of-control feeling. Maybe that is what my teacher means when she suggests we stop anticipating. Not that we stop thinking about the future, but that we allow the future to come to us and that we accept it with grace.

This isn't profound, but it's true: The future will happen. We can't control it. All we can do is plan for a multiplicity of possible or probable futures. And I, for one, am tired of spending the present worrying about a future over which I have so little control.

From now on, I'm going to plan for the future while remaining flexible, to prepare in whatever way I can without being rigid. I'm starting to see that one can only anticipate so much—after that, you're just worrying. And who has time for that?

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