

LIVE LIFE INTENTIONALLY

# Prepare to be Surprised

**T**HERE'S NOTHING LIKE the inherent unpredictability of life to keep you on your toes.

Setting goals, working your plan, keeping your eye on the ball – these are all good things. They're skills that help make you successful. But when you focus *all* of your energy on working towards specific outcomes, you've lost the magic of allowing yourself to be surprised.

And since the most predictable thing about life is that it isn't, why not welcome the surprises?

Early in my career, I had the good fortune of crossing paths with a most unlikely bearer of this message. Jim and I worked together at a bank, where he ran technical accounting with an "I love, love, love this stuff" kind of passion. If you've not lived in the world of accounting, just know these are not typically the folks talking about magic, miracles, and living with wonder.

Except for Jim. Within days of meeting him, I learned his philosophy: "Every day, keep the door open for a miracle to hap-

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**"Life is full of amazing surprises, if you keep your eyes and mind wide open. Run with the unexpected."**

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pen." For Jim, this meant actions as simple as buying a lottery ticket or smiling at a stranger in the elevator: anything that allowed for the possibility of the unexpected.

By its very nature, preparing for surprises is not a structured, linear process; but there's plenty you can do to open the door. Try on a few of the following ideas and experiment with



variations. You'll find what works for you – and it may not be what you expect!

- **Go With the Flow.** If it's sweltering in Prague, head to Inter-laken, Switzerland. Anne Robie, human resource director at RSM McGladrey and planner extraordinaire, did just this while traveling in Europe with a girlfriend. After meeting a couple who raved about the weather (and beauty) in Inter-laken, they tossed their agenda, headed for a cooler climate, and ended up paragliding over the countryside. To this day, it's one of Anne's most memorable and surprising experiences. Next time you're (metaphorically or literally) not enjoying the temperature, take a chance on another spot.
- **Loosen Your Grip.** Seven years after Anne's unexpected trip to Switzerland, she witnessed a huge surprise, this one her husband's. Uninspired in his job and convinced there was *no* possibility for anything exciting within the company, he finally decided to leave. Only hours after giving notice, a chance encounter in the lunchroom led to the *perfect* job, one that still has him jumping out of bed in the morning three years

later. A coincidence that the moment he let go, a new possibility emerged? I think not.

- **Follow a Thread.** Not a day goes by without a random encounter, an oddball coincidence, or a seemingly arbitrary email or phone call. And each one holds the possibility of a surprise. One year, one of my clients helped crew a sailboat. A few years later, she received a phone call inviting her to fill a cancelled spot on an upcoming trip. Although the dates weren't optimal, she'd been ruminating on how to get more sailing into her life and decided to go. To her surprise, she formed a deep friendship with a fellow traveler who is professionally involved with boats. From that connection, she's become part of a wonderful women's sailing community. So give it a try: make it a daily practice to grab onto one thing that shows up in your life and see where it leads.
- **Expect Good Things.** Jill Kucera, President of Catering Works, takes a few minutes every day and visualizes good things happening, no matter how smooth or rocky the circumstances. Two years ago she closed her gourmet store, Figs Market, never doubting that there would be good surprises to come. And there were. Many people she met through the Market became valuable friends and acquaintances.

“Every day, keep the door open for a miracle to happen.”

tances. Not only are they a part of her life, but many of them also contributed to the stellar year she just had with Catering Works. A different expectation would have led to a different outcome. What do you expect today?

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unexpected. Spontaneously invite someone you barely know to lunch, or pick up the phone when someone you haven't talked to in ten years pops into your

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head. Ask a total stranger what they're doing when it looks like they're up to something interesting. The specifics aren't important; just be sure you've opened yourself up for the surprises to roll in.

How do you keep the door open for surprises in your life? If you have a story to share, or if you'd just like to comment on this article, drop me a note at [sessig@priorityventures.com](mailto:sessig@priorityventures.com).



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