



The Power of Not Knowing *How letting go of knowing can set us free*

by Elizabeth J. Agnew, MS

We live in a culture of knowing. In our society, not knowing is seen as bad, so we pretend to know when we don't, or we hide when we think we don't know. And when we actually do know something, we want everyone else to know that we know! People look for answers and it's expected that we give them. Knowledge is greatly valued. So when we don't know the answer, we rack our brains until we find one we can believe. This process can be tiring.

What is so hard about not knowing? What is challenging about living at peace with the open-ended unknown?

Why can the unknown future be so scary sometimes? We can plan something out, but usually it is just for our own comfort so we think we know what will happen. Rarely does it turn out as we imagined, showing that the plan in our head was simply to satisfy the need to think we knew. Think back to a time when you didn't know what the future held. And now that future has passed. Think of how it turned out, and how you're okay now. This is where not knowing, and how we deal with that, has the most significance.

We want to operate in a framework because it helps us feel like we're in control. We want plans, we want answers.

Let's distinguish though between intentionality, setting an intention for the future, and planning, laying out the future happenings. Planning, which does have its place for organization, efficiency, and coordination's sake, is also there to serve the need to know. Intentionality, on the other hand, involves holding a vision for yourself and believing it. Having an intention does not rely on details. Having an intention and sharing it with others is a call for making your mark on the world.

When most of our actions stem from fear, it drives us to want to control our environments. In order to do this we acquire knowledge and gather information. Inherent in this method is energy seepage because we're constantly searching for information to add to our knowledge bank.

One form that our 'knowing' takes is in making conclusions. Making small conclusions about other people without all of the necessary information is also known as judging. Making conclusions does just that: it concludes an idea. It closes us to the possibilities.

Inner peace – and the resulting sustainable energy – begins with openness. What does it take to be at peace with the unknown? One word: Trust. Trust in God, the divine, serendipity, the universe, or whatever you want to call your spiritual guidance. Or, if you believe that it's all under your control: trust in your future self, that you'll know what to do when the moment arises.

If you want to learn, be willing to not know, because not knowing is where learning begins. Curiosity, questions, and inquiry all invite learning. Learning allows us to shift our observations so that we may learn more. Every time we extend our own world, we realize how much we don't know, and so getting comfortable with not knowing is essential to learning more. It's important to 'not know' in peace.

When we're comfortable with everything we don't know, and begin to believe that it's not just about knowledge and years of experience, questions flow more freely, our inhibitions lower, our interactions are enriched because we're able to be more present. We become open to experiencing what surrounds us, instead of deciding we know and forming conclusions about what surrounds us.

What tool does being okay with the unknown give us? Questions, questions, questions. Ask questions. Ask not for the sake of knowing the answer! Ask for the sake of asking. Questions are so much more powerful than answers because they open us to immense possibilities.

We can't even begin to guess where life will take us. That mystery can be exciting and invigorating, or scary. It's our choice. We guide the general direction through our interests and intentions, but the bumps and forks along the way are all to be determined. Enjoy the ride!



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