
TEACHING BEYOND THE PHYSICAL

JANUARY

THEME

Change & New Beginnings

STORIES

[No, Maybe and Yes](#)

[Empty Pages](#)

[Seasons Changing](#)

[The Lesson of the Butterfly](#)

[With Purpose and Heart](#)

MUSIC

This month's curated playlist is all about stepping into new beginnings, welcoming change and dreaming bigger than you ever have before.

FURTHER READING

Take this month's theme and lessons further with these additional books and resources.

The first month of the year is fresh with new beginnings and full of possibility. It's a time when many of us feel like we can start over as we close out the chapter of the last year and embark upon the new one. What's better than a clean slate, right?

While January 1st is an arbitrary point that separates one year from the last, in both a practical and time-keeping perspective, it's also a psychological marker and one that affords us space and permission to step into something new. This spirit of newness dates back thousands of years with the month January getting its name from the Ancient Roman god Janus. The first month of the year was dedicated to him as he was the god of doorways and transitions – endings and beginnings. As such, he was depicted with two faces, one looking to the past and the other looking toward the future.

As you step into this new year and season of your life, and as you guide your students to look back on the previous chapter and embark on a new one, may you be reminded that any change takes time, intention, and the willingness to start over in the moments we fall off course.

No, Maybe and Yes

..... story by Amy Fox

There were once three tulip bulbs named No, Maybe and Yes. No, Maybe and Yes lived at the bottom of a bulb tin and they were each content to be round, fat and dressed in their silky brown garments. When the seasons began to change, they discussed the destiny of tulip bulbs.

No said, "I don't think there is any life for tulip bulbs beyond this tin. We were simply made to live here and I'm quite content with how things are. Sure the tin box is dark and sometimes uncomfortable, but it's what I know and I like it here."

Maybe shrugged and said, "I don't like it here. It's damp and cold and quite uncomfortable. I feel like there's something more beyond the walls of this bulb tin, something more that perhaps I'm made for but..." she took a long pause, wrinkled her face and said, "No, perhaps you're right. Perhaps this is all there is to it." And with that she laid down.

Finally, Yes spoke up. "I've been told," she said quite certainly, "that by ourselves we can do little, but if we put ourselves into the hands of life, there's a greater future for us."

No scoffed.

Maybe turned her head uninterested in what Yes had to say.

At that very moment, the tin bulb box opened and a hand reached inside, searching for a tulip bulb.

No scurried out of reach and dug himself far into the corner. Maybe rolled over onto her side, unsure of what to do. As for Yes? She rolled right into the hands of life who picked her up and buried her in the cold, damp earth of winter.

"What a fool!" yelled No, "Serves her right for thinking it was safe to leave."

"I don't know," said Maybe, "do you think she was right about there being more than this?"

"Does it really matter?" asked No, "You're stuck here anyway."

"I guess not," said Maybe, turning back over onto her side.

Time passed and the winter's ground began to thaw and as winter made its way to spring, No and Maybe were no where to be seen. No had shriveled up and died and Maybe worried herself to death wondering if she made the right choice. Nothing remained of those two but a few dried leaves.

But what about Yes who had let herself be buried all winter long? Well, she was a sight to behold! For you see, she had burst out of the ground and blossomed into a whole new life as a beautiful yellow tulip.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Where in your life are you a “No”? Where in your life are you a “Maybe”? Where in your life are you a “Yes”?

DURING CLASS

What fears are holding you back from saying “Yes” to the life you want to live or the goal you want to achieve?

Where would saying “No” benefit you and allow you to refocus your goal or help you better meet your own personal needs?

CLOSING CLASS

Whether it’s losing weight, training for a marathon, learning a new skill, writing a book, getting the promotion or finding the most amazing relationship, we don’t get or achieve anything we want simply by wanting it. There’s a price to pay for everything and we’ll either pay the price for the dream or we’ll pay the price for the excuse.

Is there some area of your life where you’re paying a cost you no longer wish to pay? Where the cost is too high and the gain is too little?

Where can you decide to pay the price in advance? To be a yes to life and the process of making progress?

EXTRAS

“Everything you want in life has a price connected to it. There’s a price to pay if you want to make things better and a price to pay for just leaving things as they are – there’s a price for everything.”

– Henry Browne

Empty Pages

..... story by William Oak

One evening, a young woman went out alone to walk barefoot by the ocean after the sun had set. She stopped in her path and turned so that she could see the footsteps she had made in the sand, but they had already been washed away by the waves. When she turned to continue her walk, she was startled by the presence of an old woman who appeared out of no where, wrapped in a blanket and sitting by a fire. The old woman was slowly paging through the leaves of a leather-covered book.

She walked up to the old woman and asked, "Where did you come from? I didn't see you here a moment ago. And how did you start this fire so quickly?"

Her questions went unanswered but were instead met with a reply, "Sit with me, child. I have something to show you."

As the young woman sat down by the fire, the mysterious stranger handed her the book. She curiously turned the pages one by one and was amazed to discover they contained the story of her whole life, from the early days of childhood to the present. She then turned to the page where she met the old woman by the fire during her walk on the beach – but upon turning to the next page, she found it empty.

She frantically began to turn the rest of the pages in the book only to find that they too were all empty. In her bewilderment, she looked at the old woman and pleaded with her to explain.

"Does this mean that my life will end tonight?" she asked.

"No, my child," said the woman, "it means tonight your life begins."

At that moment, the old woman took the book from the young woman and began to tear out each page, throwing them one by one into the fire until all that was left were blank pages.

She handed the book of empty pages to the young woman.

“You see,” said the old woman, “just as the waves washed away your footsteps in the sand, your past is forever gone, never to return. The only moment you ever truly possess is here and now.

Each new moment is the beginning of the rest of your life and is to be lived to the fullest, for you will not have a chance to live that moment a second time.

Most important of all, each new day brings an opportunity to love – one that may never come to you again.

As for your future, you are free to shape it as you wish, for it has not yet been written.”

Then, as mysteriously as she had appeared, the old woman stood and walked away, disappearing into the darkness of night.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Creating a life we love and life worth living starts with each moment as it's the thoughts we think today, the words we speak today, the actions we take today that inform our future.

In this new moment, on your blank page, what's the feeling you want to leave here with and where can you start to breathe space around that?

DURING CLASS

The next moment is unwritten. Are you living into a future self that makes you proud?

Where can you saturate your entire being with gratitude for this moment, this body, your practice and life?

CLOSING CLASS

So often it's not until we hit a breaking point or experience some major life challenge that we make different decisions or are forced to do different things. Fear wakes us up to the present moment, the gift of life and the power we have to create it.

May you remember that you do not need a breaking point to start again. This moment, your next breath, is all you need.

EXTRAS

"There's a lot of things we all wish we could have done differently. But, if you spend too much of your life trying to change the past, your biggest regret will be that you spent your life wishing you could change a done past, when you could have changed your present and unwritten future."

– Nat Lue

Seasons Changing

..... source unknown

There was once a man who had four sons. He wanted his sons to learn how not to judge things so quickly and so he sent them each on a quest to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away.

The first son went to the pear tree in winter, the second in spring, the third in summer and the fourth son in fall.

When a year's time had passed and each son had went to the pear tree, the father called them together and asked them to describe what they saw.

The first son said, "The pear tree was ugly. Its roots were twisted and bent and its branches were desolate."

The second son laughed and said, "Brother, you must be mistaken for the pear tree I saw was covered in green buds, so full of promise."

"You both must have went to the wrong tree," exclaimed the third brother.

"And why is that?" asked the father.

"Because," said the third son, "the pear tree was not covered in green buds but laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet. The tree was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen."

The fourth son simply shook his head and remarked, "My brothers, you each are mistaken." Turning to his father he said, "the tree you sent me to was ripe and drooping with the most decadent pears. It was full of life and fulfillment."

As the sons began to quarrel with one another, the father simply held up his hand and silence filled the space. With that he spoke: "Each of you are right in your description of the pear tree."

The brothers looked to each other with confusion and the father continued, "You see, each of you had seen but only a season in the tree's life. What you saw was a snap shot, rather than the entire picture. And just like we shouldn't judge a tree by only one season, we should not judge a person or an event in our lives by a singular moment.

Life can only be measured at the end, with all parts accounted for, when all the seasons have passed.

If you give up when it's winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer and the fulfillment of your fall."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

In life, it's easy to judge a person by a first impression, to assume a day will be "bad" because it started off not so great, or to make an assumption about where our life is going based on circumstances in our past. But no single moment tells the whole story. Rather our day, our life, is a collection of all these moments – the highs and the lows – and everything we have experienced has brought us to the present moment.

DURING CLASS

Where is your judgement getting in the way of feeling good?

Where can you release expectation and move into appreciation for what your body can do today?

CLOSING CLASS

Just like the sons in the story, if we are quick to pass judgment on anything or any person, we'll find ourselves in a limiting narrative, one that feels as if it is already written. But, if we are willing to take a step back, to see the bigger picture, to appreciate the challenging moments that have afforded us strength or taught us an invaluable lesson – if we can open to the promise of tomorrow and realize we always have a choice over what we think, say and do – we'll find fulfillment wherever we are, knowing the quality of our life is in our hands.

EXTRAS

"Do not judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant."

– Robert Louis Stevenson

The Lesson of the Butterfly

..... story by Paulo Coelho

A man spent hours watching a butterfly struggling to emerge from its cocoon. It managed to make a small hole, but its body was too large to get through it. After a long struggle, it appeared to be exhausted and remained absolutely still.

The man decided to help the butterfly and, with a pair of scissors, he cut open the cocoon thus releasing the butterfly. However, the butterfly's body was very small and wrinkled and its wings were all crumpled.

The man continued to watch, hoping that, at any moment, the butterfly would open its wings and fly away. Nothing happened. In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its brief life dragging around its swollen body and shriveled wings, incapable of flight.

What the man, out of kindness and his eagerness to help, had failed to understand was that the tight cocoon and the efforts that the butterfly had to make in order to squeeze out of that tiny hole were nature's way of training the butterfly and of strengthening its wings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Sometimes it's the struggles we face that are exactly what we need in order to develop the courage, strength and fortitude for the road ahead. And it's the very things that hold the power to break us, that also hold the power to birth us – but only if we're willing to grow through those challenging moments.

DURING CLASS

When we refuse to be with our challenges or sit with difficult feelings, we find ourselves stuck – unprepared for the next hurdle, unable to fly on our own to our next destination. But, if instead we choose our challenges, we'll find that the way out is through.

If we choose to feel the difficult things, we heal those very things.

CLOSING CLASS

The next time you feel stuck, as if nothing is changing in the way that you desire, may you be reminded that growth is happening even when we don't see it and like the butterfly, we too must be patient for all good things come in time.

EXTRAS

"A challenge only becomes an obstacle when you bow to it."

– Ray A. Davis

With Purpose and Heart

..... source unknown (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

An old pencil maker took his newest pencil aside and just before he was about to pack him into a box he said, "There are five things you must know as a new pencil before I send you out into the world. Always remember these five things and you will become the best pencil that you can be:

First, remember that you will be able to do many great things, but only if you put yourself in someone else's hands.

Second, from time to time you will experience painful sharpenings. Just remember, these moments will only make you a better pencil.

Third, keep in mind that you will be able to correct any mistakes you might make along the way. Nothing is permanent.

Fourth, the most important part of you, is what's on the inside.

And, finally, remember that upon every surface on which you are used, you will leave your mark. No matter what happens or whatever doubts come up, you must continue to write."

The newly made pencil listened to his maker with intent and promised he would remember to do these five things so that he could live his life with purpose and heart.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

At a time of year that is heavily focused on introspection as we look back on the previous year and as we look forward to the year ahead, where in your life can you live with purpose and heart?

DURING CLASS

Where have the painful sharpenings of the past year made you stronger?

Where have mistakes taught you invaluable lessons?

CLOSING CLASS

Where do you want to leave your mark in this year to come?

What story do you wish to write?

And what is one small action you can take today to make your future self proud?

EXTRAS

"The beginning is the most important part of the work."

– Plato

FURTHER READING

For generating feelings and getting clarity around your goals

[The Desire Map](#) by Danielle LaPorte

For leading your life with the right kind of questions

[Start with Why](#) by Simon Sinek

For developing new skills and creating lasting change

[The Talent Code](#) by Daniel Coyle

For revolutionizing your goals and aligning with your soul year-round

[One Word That Will Change Your Life](#) by Jon Grodon, Dan Britton and Jimmy Page