



LAURA WAGNER

## From Fatalistic to Futuristic in Six Questions

Pandemic or not, we've all had moments during life's most challenging times where we've cornered ourselves with thoughts and questions like these:

**"There is nothing I can do."**

**"What's going to happen to me (us)?"**

**"How long will this go on?"**

**"Nothing is ever going to be the same."**

**"I don't know how I'm going to get through this."**

**"When I go out, I feel like everything / everyone is dangerous."**

Most of us have had at least one of those thoughts during troubling times, and they're normal.

Even though we want to push uncomfortable or anxiety-provoking thoughts away, that is the very thing that magnifies them.

Close your eyes, take a mental step back and imagine you're watching the scroll of sentences in your mind that keep circling through. Seriously, just like when you're watching a news channel with the stock market numbers.

Just notice.

Don't judge yourself or tell your mind to shut it down. It's trying to work things out for you, but it's going to eventually need your help to get out of a negative thought loop.

One of the best ways to do that is by asking yourself questions. I like questions better than a mantra or statement you carry around in your brain.

Those are great, but good questions empower you to create your own answers versus having something handed to you by someone outside of yourself.

Here are some empowering questions to think about and answer ... in writing.

I've connected them to the unknown future we are facing in 2020, but you could revisit these five years from now and they'll still be relevant.

**<< continue to page 2**

What is your greatest fear or where do you experience the most anxiety at this time?

When your mind “runs wild” or gets in a “spin cycle” what are some of your most painful thoughts? Write them in sentences or phrases.

*Now that you have this “mind data,” I want you to look at some of those thoughts and ask yourself any or all of the following questions.*

**1. Is it useful for me to think this way?**

**2. Is it creating a feeling I want, or leading me to a solution?**

**3. What assumptions am I making?**

**4. Are my thoughts facts or opinions?**

**5. What evidence do I have or can I find to dispute my thinking?**

**6. What is something I can do right this minute to help my situation? Is there an action I can take? Is there a person I can talk to?**

*Write these questions in the “Notes” or “Voice Memos” apps on your phone.*

*Look at them when any painful thoughts surface; this can help you slow things down and reset.*

**Here are some additional reflection questions to help you tap into or gain some perspective about your life during the COVID-19 pandemic:**

>> What are three positive things that have come from staying home during the pandemic?

>> What have been three of your greatest difficulties or challenges?

>> Write your thoughts about *panic vs. preparedness*.

- Have you panicked during this time? What were your actions as a result?
- How does preparedness look for you?
- What actions did you take to prepare for life at home (either before stay-at-home/ shelter-at-home or after the fact)? What does preparedness look like for your future? Your finances? Your career? Learning something? Creating something?

>> “If there is one thing I wish the world would learn from this time, it’s ...”

>> Imagine looking back at Spring 2020 one year from now ... five years from now ... ten years from now.

What opportunities might you see that came from this challenge?

>> “Something I am letting go of during this time, or don’t think I will do in the future is...”

>> “The biggest way my life has changed so far is...”

>> List at least five things you are grateful for. Are any of those new realizations connected to the pandemic?