



Three Mindful Take-Aways to Bring into 2022

"Hope is hearing the melody of the future."

Ruben A. Alvez

Once again, much like last year, the beginning of 2022 finds us in a world of instability and uncertainty. Yet, even as the pandemic continues (with the Delta and Omicron variants), we remain hopeful. We hope that this new year will be different. We pray that fewer people will die from COVID or natural disasters brought on by global warming and climate change. We pray for life to go back to the way it was in a pre-pandemic world (even though now it seems unlikely.)

It is easy to look back at the last two years and lament the loss of what was. And it's reasonable to look ahead and hope for great changes in the coming year as science is catching up to the virus. Yet, before we quickly throw our gaze to the horizon, perhaps we ought not be so quick to move forward without looking back at what good the year has taught us about ourselves. After all, we've developed many good habits that are worth keeping. Here are my top three things I believe we learned about ourselves to take into 2022:

1. We've learned to be kinder to ourselves

This year we've endured multiple lockdowns, illnesses in the family, job losses, and relative isolation from our colleagues and friends, and we've made the best of it. We learned that we are more resilient than we thought and that such flexibility is the best way of combating stress.

We realized that as productive as we believed we needed to be, it was equally important not to hold ourselves to super-human standards all the time. We learned that we could be kind to ourselves in simple ways, for instance, by enjoying the time of eating a delicious meal or taking a nice walk every day or taking a few minutes to meditate.

2. We've learned to appreciate the power and importance of empathy

Especially in the wake of this new omicron up-tick, I've noticed people are speaking to each other and communicating in their emails with more patience and understanding. There's a heightened awareness of what others may be going through. Maintaining this habit in 2022 would benefit everyone in an increasingly divisive world.

3. We've cultivated our creativity

Before the pandemic, how many of us did jigsaw puzzles? Now there's a puzzle on a table in my living room all the time. I would never have imagined that two years ago. Now I can't imagine it any other way. The numbers back it up. Hobbies are on the rise.

More of us have come to appreciate hobbies as a way to relax the mind and escape the confines of the coronavirus. In the year ahead, whether the pandemic becomes endemic or not, these creative pursuits are certainly worth their weight in gold because they relax our mind and balance our emotional and spiritual wellbeing in so many beautiful ways.

The ups and downs of last year have taught us much. Most importantly, we can be even more resilient than we ever imagined. We all know someone who lost a job or a loved one to Covid-19. We've learned how to grieve our losses in ways we'd never expected. Loneliness has been a big issue, especially for older adults. Layoffs have affected workers, particularly in some industry sectors. So many local businesses, including small and medium scale entrepreneurs, have barely survived; many others didn't.

Yet so many of us have bounced back each time, emerging from our self-imposed social distancing with hope and energy, determined to imagine a better future that is not the same as the past. We have begun living life with as much normalcy as possible, taking the various pandemic-triggered setbacks in our stride.

Resilience is a beautiful thing. It sustains hope and makes life worth living. It will stand us in good stead in the New Year, too.

"Hope arouses a passion for the possible."

William Sloan Coffin

Mindfulness practice:

Set aside some time, such as ten or twenty minutes, and either through journaling or during meditation, **keep asking yourself the question – 'for me, hope means...'** What emerges for you as you keep sitting with this question? Does anything unexpected arise for you?

Anja Tanhane