

## Leaning Forward

By Joyce Leonard

I often find myself pushing through something to get to the thing I really want to do. I call that “leaning forward.” Sometimes this leaning forward lasts for just an hour or two, and sometimes it lasts for years. It’s an unpleasant feeling, making me anxious, cranky, pushy, and impatient. When I feel this way, I’ve learned to stop and ask myself what is it that I am pushing through to do. One time while I was running errands, I discovered that I just needed to use the bathroom. After a shop-owner was kind enough to let me use theirs, I couldn’t believe the difference it made. I was instantly calmer and more patient, and I actually enjoyed running the rest of my errands.

Another time I discovered that I was anxious to get home and water my garden. It was still morning, and I was committed to something until late-afternoon, so I had all day to worry about this. I imagined my veggie garden wilting under the hot sun with every passing hour. There was really nothing I could do about the situation, so I decided to give up worrying about it. Why ruin my entire day leaning forward until I could get home? It’s hard to just stop thinking about something, but with diligence and practice, it can be done. The practice is coming back into the present moment. Throughout the day, I’d find myself worrying again about my veggies and I’d have to keep coming back to the present moment. Not leaning forward to when I could water them, but being right where I was in the moment. Whatever was going to happen to my veggies was going to happen, whether I worried about them or not. I ended up being more present and actually enjoying my day.

Sometimes, we lean forward for years. We think that our lives will really begin once something that we’re wanting happens...like graduating, retiring, getting healthy, being in a certain relationship, landing that dream job, or remodeling the house. We discount all that we are experiencing between now and then – like it doesn’t count because we haven’t arrived at our ultimate goal. “I’ll be happy when...” becomes our unconscious motto. We’re anxious, cranky, pushy, and impatient. Years go by and we’re not really present with our friends, our family, or even ourselves. When we find ourselves pushing through, it is time to stop and take notice of all that is in our lives today. Be present to what is happening right now. Enjoy the everyday things, like going out with friends, watching the butterflies on the flowers, driving with these beautiful trees all around us. Come back, again and again, to what is right in front of us. And enjoy each moment, as it is, without leaning forward.