

# Predict the predictable

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"Ugh," I thought. "Not again." My eyes watered and my nose ran. Why? Because my allergy spray had run out. And even though the label states that it contains 120 sprays, which means it lasts 60 days, I hadn't purchased another one in advance. This should have been a total non-event. Instead, my lack of planning had led to frustration and inconvenience. And a runny nose.

Sigh.

Why do we do this to ourselves? If you're like me, you allow yourself to get surprised and subsequently bent out of shape about things that are totally predictable, expected, even guaranteed. Do any of these sound familiar?

1. I'm scrambling to get a gift for the teacher as the end of the school year approaches, as if I didn't know this was coming for at least 9 months.
2. I'm late for work because I left 5 minutes later than usual, plus it's raining (as forecasted).
3. I invite that family member who is routinely negative and critical, and then feel disappointed when she is negative and critical.

In the moment, these feel like surprises, but they are completely predictable. Each situation has an easy resolution.

1. Set a reminder my phone to buy Target gift cards in early May.
2. Leave on time. Every day. With extra time on rainy days.
3. Stop inviting her. Or lower my expectations.

Other situations that feel like surprises if I'm not looking ahead include insurance premium due dates, back-to-school paperwork, the impact of Daylight Savings Time, car inspection deadlines, and even birthdays and holidays. When I take time to predict these predictable events, they are no big deal. When I'm surprised by them instead, they cause a whole lot of stress.

I encourage you to make your list of "surprises" and then take steps to prevent the stress associated with them. Doing this has been a very helpful exercise for me, and I've had many fewer surprises in the last few months than I used to.

There are plenty of events that catch us off guard, true surprises - accidents, illnesses, windfalls, losses, and the like. We are in a better position to deal with these unpredictable events by predicting - and preparing for - the predictable.