

@UlowaNeuro Notes

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As scientists we are driven by curiosity. We ask questions and consider how to find the answers. We plan creative experiments to test our assumptions. We envision the paper published, the grant awarded.

But we also know that our work is not linear. We weave our way through complicated steps toward a goal, and along the way there are unexpected curves. It's inevitable. It's sometimes frustrating. But it's also an opportunity.

If we embrace the unexpected and focus on what can we do with the new information, we can move forward instead of being fixed on the past. Whether in the lab, with a patient, or even with friends and family, our ability to remain open and flexible builds community and is a key to discovery.



When my expectations go sideways, I often think of an [interview](#) with the great jazz pianist Herbie Hancock (pictured above during his September 2023 performance at Hancher Auditorium) in which he shares a memory of a time he played the “wrong” chord behind Miles Davis’s trumpet solo during a performance:

“It sounded like a big mistake. I ...put my hands around my ears. Miles paused for a second, then he played some notes that made my chord right, which astounded me ...What I realize now is that Miles didn’t hear it as a mistake. He heard it as something that happened, an event...and he dealt with it.”

A pause.

Think about it the next time your experience doesn’t resonate with what you expected to happen. Like Miles Davis, pause to consider how this new information might open the door to something new and how your response could impact your collaborators as profoundly as Davis did for Hancock. An unexpected direction might become an essential part of your journey.

As Hancock said in the interview: “We can look for the world to be as we’d like it to be, but the only way we grow is to have a mind that’s open enough to experience situations as they are.”

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