

## Tolerating Uncertainty and Imagining the Future



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In a Youtube video titled, "[The Sudden Obliteration of Expectation](#)" the host [Hank Green](#) makes an attempt to succinctly describe the feeling of uncertainty that we may be experiencing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. He describes it as a "sudden obliteration of expectation". He experienced a similar process when he was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis. He feels that the word "wuthering" may be close to describing the feeling he had when first diagnosed. It is defined as "a rushing or raging that you're powerless to stop, an atmospheric tumult" (as defined by Emily Dickenson via Susie Dent, a linguist). He hypothesizes that each of us will have to go through this process of accepting and integrating this "new normal." It may involve having to structure our life around the reality of the situation we find ourselves in. It may mean accepting the possibility that things could involve future pain or that things could get much worse. But based on his experiences, he predicts that eventually we will include this experience as part of imagining our future.

It may take a long time to understand what our future is going to be like in the context of uncertainty, because the current reality is prone to changing over time. Hank notes that:

- No one can tell us what our future will be because it will be different for each person.
- Our minds will search for ways for our new story to make sense, most likely "swinging around wildly" in an attempt to find the place that meshes with our own unique observed reality.
- Some days we will find ways to believe everything is actually the same and "maybe this isn't real," and other days our thoughts will swing in the exact other direction and we may be overwhelmed with feelings such as frustration and anger. This swinging is not a symptom, but a strategy to "find where normal is". An analogy is that if the ground started suddenly moving beneath you, you'd have to balance and move from one side to the other (or even drop to one knee) to find some stability, but when the ground stops moving, you will rise again.
- The process can be stressful and cognitively taxing, and in relation to the pandemic, it might make one more susceptible to addiction or to negative or unproductive thoughts.
- Eventually there will be a new version of reality that you can place yourself in; it just takes time to rebuild that. It's a "way-finding process" that may include overreacting and underreacting, and not being sure which you are doing at any given moment.
- We will catch ourselves, and we will rise, because "that's what we do."
- A part of the process is sharing and learning from each other.
- Do things to create stability in your life to help you better imagine the future.
- Find routines that are feasible and enjoyable within the new context.
- Rely on others and accept help when needed.
- Be weak when you can't be strong and strong when you can.

## Comments about expectations:

Many viewers of this video shared stories of their own hardships. Here are comments shared about how expectations have been shattered by sudden or traumatic experiences:

"It was only once the wuthering had passed that I realized the future I imagined would never have been real anyway."

"It's not there anymore. It doesn't get replaced with anything; it's just gone."

"Grieving a future I never got to experience is one of the worst kinds of grief I've ever experienced."

"Losing not what I had, but what I had envisioned."

"You spend your whole life stuck in the labyrinth, thinking about how you'll escape it one day, and how awesome it will be, and imagining that future keeps you going, but you never do it. You just use the future to escape the present."

"Life, Love, Hope, Future all collapsing, then leaving just gray numbness that seems like it will never dissipate."

"The story you've been quietly silently telling yourself about what the future is going to be like, that story just falls apart. It's not there anymore. It doesn't get replaced with anything, it's just gone."

"When you realize all the grand plans you had for the future have to be tossed aside altogether, that there is nothing you can do about it but to live with it."

"The numbing. I've settled on this word as the numbness just pervades my entire being. In my experience, this numbing sensation is my realization that what has occurred is irrevocable. The first time I experienced this was when my grandfather passed away. In his last six months, I physically visited his nursing home every weekend, but I chose to spend time tinkering with some computer programs in a different room. The concept that a person's existence would cease wasn't a notion I had ever entertained before. I felt that there was always a next time to spend. Subsequent times, the numbing came when my expectation for what looked like a budding relationship was met with a denial/rejection."

"Some days I'm very much "it is what it is, worrying won't change anything", others I feel like the world is ending and I don't know what to do"

I vacillate between "everything is going to be exactly the same" and "my life will forever be changed in ways I can't comprehend yet but frightens me senseless".

"I felt cheated because I had certain expectations about my life post baby and the life didn't turn up that way."

"Journey after depression diagnosis. The "Nope, I'm fine, I don't even think I have depression" then boom!"

"It reminds me of extinction. An organism you had always assumed was going to be around is definitely going to be gone within your life. That part of the world is just gone, an empty space where it used to be so full."

"This reminds me of when I was first diagnosed with leukemia. I got the call from my doctor at 3 in the afternoon at work and I suddenly felt like the world had become inexplicably quiet, as though my entire life had been leading to this moment of dreadful solitude, and that every moment following would be always be defined by this day: before diagnosis and after. Whether or not there's a specific word for that feeling of absolute and all-consuming isolation I don't know, but I certainly understand the feeling."

"I remember feeling that it wasn't just that I didn't have the answers anymore. I didn't even know what the questions were. There's a Norwegian expression that "the road is created as you walk it" and that's what he and his doctors did - they created the road. Now I guess we're all going to have to."

"I care for a dementia patient and one day this person told me that when she forgets things, important things to her like the names of her children, it feels like she's on the beach shore, when the sand and water moves under your feet and you almost feel like you're going to fall."

"When I imagine it in my mind, there's just empty space next to me, and I'm walking alone. That was a wuthering moment, and it's been like a constant, shifting earthquake ever since. Thanks for giving me a better grasp on the feeling. I'm not sure I even want to settle into this new normal, awful and strange as it is. Is there a term for espoused wuthering? I choose to be unsettled. I choose the tumult because it is easier than settling among the shattered pieces."

"Here we are sitting on what feels like the edge of that moment. I'm not ready to let go of the "Before" but I know the "After" is coming" because I've has some small moments like this, but it's never been this big."

"Robert Frost said, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by." That has made all the difference. Sometimes the road chooses us."

"It hit me squarely in the chest that I don't have any real control over my future."

## Comments about Adapting:

Here are comments that viewers shared about what they have learned about adaptation to change, or how they themselves have adapted to adverse events or significant changes:

"The best thing about all this is that we will never again take 'normal' for granted."

"We're all learning as we go along now, and it helps to remember that, unsteady as it all seems today, one day we will find our footing. History is proof that we will, as we always have."

"Do you understand that we will never be the same again?" We have to live, we march on."

"I've had to reimagine myself with all these limitations, but I haven't lost all control, even though it feels that way sometimes."

"Perspectivism. When I think my problems are bad, I just look at the world around me and in no time, I realize that my problems are as nothing."

"The only way I've got through this is with the incredible patience and support of my friends and family, and with the realization that while my life may be different, that doesn't mean it can't be good."

"This brings to mind the Buddhist ideas of detachment from the ego, meaning detachment from both the self and the imagined future self in light of the realization that life is constantly changing. That has given me some solace."

"It's a shattering, like a mirror was in front of you, and you knew what you were seeing, but now the mirror has shattered, and you see a yawning void beyond what you thought you knew. And you realize too how shallow your knowing was. You see that you didn't really know what you THOUGHT you knew in the first place, and everything is broken around you and inside of you. And you can't even move because there's broken mirror all over your feet and where is it safe to go now? Putting one step forward is difficult and painful and nothing beyond that step seems possible. But you will make that step. At one point, that will be the only way forward. Somehow, life goes on. And so do I. I don't know how long it will take, but eventually these things will be the Before, and we'll be living in the After. There will be parts of the path where we can't do anything except hold on. When we're in those places, it's okay to just hold on."

"It took me a while to get my feet back under me. I remember thinking, I'm trying to adjust, but adjust to what? It was a moving target. Eventually I learned to adjust to living with uncertainty, because that was my new normal. Now I always refer to it as "my own peculiar flavor of normal." Life is good. We'll get through this. I've already seen a lot of my neighbors reaching out to help seniors and folks at high risk. Our new motto is: Come together by staying apart."

"The "hedonic treadmill" is the tendency of humans to quickly return to a relatively stable level of happiness despite major positive or negative events or life changes. Humans are remarkably adaptable and able to find contented normalness in ever-worsening conditions."

"Identifying derailment when it occurs is a very important step for any kind of identity-specific problem. A lot of the time, in therapeutic contexts, clinicians will try and get their clients to identify where their 'derailment' happened. After doing so, challenging their specific negative or unrealistic conceptions regarding the formation of their new identity. Effectively, hoping to challenge the negative and unhealthy thought processes one might have about the recent change in their life."

"On the opposite side of the crisis, where you come to place yourself in a new cognitive reality with realistic, well-adjusted expectations, is called "radical acceptance" It's a skill often taught to sufferers of depression and anxiety as part of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT, an extension of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) as one of the pivotal steps to get unstuck when trying to move past trigger events and past traumas. Additionally, the bit about correcting the internal sense of one's situation with objective reality is taught in DBT as "checking the facts" as a means of emotional regulation to avoid spiraling into a depressive cycle or panic attack."

"I was overwhelmed not only by the losses associated with what happened to me, but with the inability to articulate everything I was feeling and all the responses my brain was having. Although I have been very gradually leaning into acceptance of my current reality and the uncertainty of my future, I found your descriptions soothed part of what I still have to process and understand and make peace with. You normalized my behaviors, thoughts, actions, impulses, and insecurities, in a way that others haven't been able to in their supportive conversations. One thing I've felt shame over is the length of time I have been struggling, being thrown back and forth in my grief. It helped to hear this same prolonged journey applied to a different source of wuthering."

"In this new state of the world, I know many people are feeling this feeling that an ominous force will take our future from us. Even now, it is still in our lives, still making us hesitant to envision our future because of the possibilities that frighten us. That our lives have been forever changed, that we can't go back. And we can't. We can only be there for each other, no matter what the future holds. We are all in this together, just as my husband and I are in our leukemia journey together. And that is what you hold on to. We are not alone."

"The feeling for me was of nothing ever being the same, and there being nothing I could do to change it. It was really weird and really scary. I didn't want to accept it and I pretended nothing was happening at all. Which caused me to bottle up my feelings about the change I wasn't willing to accept was true. And once I started to accept it, things started feeling better. Of course, it was (and is) still crazy different but it was okay in some way."

"When I was 16, I flipped my car over by hitting a guardrail (luckily I was fine). Before I hit the guardrail, I tried to gain control over the car – over-steer, over-compensate, repeat, until I realized I couldn't avoid the accident and I thought "There's nothing I can do to avoid this." So I took my hands off the wheel. I've found this analogy has applied a lot in my life (fortunately not so physically or dramatically). As long as I was fighting the reality, I felt kind of out of control. Once I "took my hands off the wheel" I was able to accept whatever new life event was being thrown at me."

"Life just took a hard right, the view out the front windshield just changed from what you thought it'd always be, and now you're barreling down an unknown road, not necessarily in the driver's seat. I call it the "churn", like everything all gets thrown up in the air by a gust of wind (or in the water by a boat propeller, which is where "churn" comes from) and you're just tap-dancing to stay upright while you wait to see where it all settles down, because there's not a d\*mn thing you can do about it until it does. Hank's right, though - it does settle down eventually, and then it becomes the new definition of "normal", at least until the next upheaval. Those older and wiser than me would probably say the word we're looking for here is "life".

"I went through a process of mourning my life and the way it was. This gave me a huge dose of perspective and helped me appreciate the good and great days. But the uncertainty is always there. My new normal is that there is no normal - and this is okay."

"For me personally at least, as I accept what has happened to me, with me, or by me, it becomes easier for me to get along with it, work with, or towards it, and maybe even sometimes to better the situation if it is potentially in my hands. Acceptance has helped me a lot indeed."

"Carrie Hope Fletcher talked about how certain events create a wedge in your life. This wedge creates a before and an after, which are distinctly separate. You will always think of your life as before and after

this "thing". I think most of us have many different wedges in our lives and in my life, they have come completely unexpectedly. It can be so difficult to deal with the aftermath of the wedge, but I've found comfort in talking about my wedge and listening to others talk about theirs. It helps us all to know we're experiencing this world together."

"I think grief is part of every transition, whether we label it a good or bad transition. Breaking a bone is a transition from a whole to a broken state, and we grieve the loss of our wholeness and all the potential it gave. Becoming a parent is a transition from living for oneself to living for another, and while we celebrate the arrival of the other and the project of provision for that other that makes our lives so much bigger than they were when we were living for ourselves, it is also a very legitimate occasion for grieving our freedom to live for ourselves and all the potential it gave."

"Parents have to grieve the loss of the child they thought they would have before they can accept the child they have. (Not to say these parents don't love their disabled children to the end of the earth... But they have to grieve for being unable to do certain things, like teach their child to ride a bike, or go to college, or whatever the parent's specific ideas of parenting were prior)."

"Extreme "cognitive dissonance" is the extraordinary sensation that what was expected and what is reality do not match. The greater the mismatch, or disharmony, the more unpleasant the feeling. When we feel it, we begin to seek out relief from the feeling. Most times in the form of justification and confirmation bias seeking if the story of the disharmony can be convoluted to be interpreted as harmony in the look back. But in times like these, or your experience of a persistent and life changing diagnosis, retelling a story doesn't change reality and we continue to experience the dissonance. As you mentioned, it makes for a period of time where behavioral variation and vulnerability to dysfunctional behaviors are both very high. Many people can trace chronic substance abuse to very dissonant experiences. The bright side through it all is that it also gives us freedom and the kick in the pants to build a new normal. A consistent life is a life without many forced opportunities for change. An experience like this can be pivotal because so much is in flux. We get a chance to reinvent ourselves now. One of the most effective ways to guide that reinvention, is to ask yourself, "how do you want your friends to describe your actions in each of these upcoming moments? And what actions, in each moment, given this dissonant experience, will fit those descriptions?" You can be the you that you want to be. These experiences are opportunities. Very uncomfortable, and amazing, opportunities."

"It is okay to mourn the loss of the life you thought you would have. I did not mourn the relationship. I mourned what I thought my relationship would be, how I thought my life would have gone if my marriage had been all I had hoped. I wrote letters to my past self, acknowledging what I had hoped, explaining what was going to happen now. Part of incorporating this 'new normal' is to be mad, sad, disappointed, hurt by the loss you have experienced. So let us all be sad that we have lost the ability to go out and do things whenever we wanted. If applicable, mourn the loss of important ceremonies, like weddings and graduations. Mourn the loss of normalcy and physical contact with people in your life. Mourn the loss of being away from your abusers, from being able to have more opportunities to avoid triggers for all manner of mental health issues. It's okay to be mad and sad and disappointed. That won't make it come back, but it does mean you aren't a bad person or selfish or have no discipline if this loss affects you and your behavior. I hope this can all help us reach acceptance of this new normal."

"I had a bit of a "wuthering" myself a few months after I developed fibromyalgia (on account of a life-threatening medical incident I experienced). About a year and a half later now, I can't even remember what it felt like to have a healthy body and normal muscular function. I'm only just now getting to a

point of accepting that my life will never be what I thought it was. When the pain is at its worst I still struggle not to spiral into panic and abject despair, and at my best I often become unreasonably optimistic, or at least forget how hard it'll actually be to create the future I imagine for myself now. Still, I've found myself a new path forward, and in facing my pain and trauma and grief I've grown and learned more about myself than I ever imagined was within me. I've had to switch majors to pursue a more sedentary career path, and I'll need a wheelchair to get around on campus, but I'm going back to school and am well on my way towards achieving remission. At this point, I've at least moved beyond wishing it had never happened and that I could go back to my old life. Though I'm getting better every day, this is my new normal, and now I'm just trying to achieve the best life that I possibly can within my new limitations."

"It took me years to accept my depression. I tried denying it and telling myself it was normal, I tried rebelling against it and finding all sorts of distractions, I even tried letting it take over me and pass and continue on its way. None of that worked. I had to slowly come to the realization, as well, that nothing was going to be as sweet as it was when I was a child, or as simple as things could've been if I wasn't this version of me. It's never been easy to let go of that fantasy. It's still not easy to let go of that fantasy. I've been living with depression for a majority of my life now. It's as familiar as the blue sky to me, and yet it continues to catch me off guard. Balance is a delicate thing, and even once you find it: It's never perfect. "Nothing is ever set in stone" is what I've learned throughout the years, no matter how long or how well you think you know life. You'll lose things, you'll win things, and sometimes, you'll simply have to live with things. But one thing's for certain: No matter what happens that you can or can't control, you always have a choice. A choice between having hope and giving up.

"I've had severe depression for almost two decades. I'm pretty functional, so I manage to fly under the radar most of the time, even though I feel really, really bad. But holy cow is it exhausting when pretty much everyone you love asks you when you'll be able to get off that medication finally? When will you get better? Go back to normal? No, guys. This is normal. This is it. This is me now, and I'm having a hard enough time adjusting to that, without you telling me it's not enough." I know people mean well but when I talk about my depression to someone and they say, "you should exercise or do something you like or write in a journal," it feels so isolating. Some people are understanding that sometimes that's not enough, but others just don't get it. It's hard to explain that I've tried all the things and that some days it's hard to just get out of bed. It feels like I have to defend myself. But they just don't get it. So sometimes I just go with what they say because it's too much to fight it."

"When yearning becomes obsession and obsession becomes pain, it brings awareness. It brings you to a fork in the road where you choose between two paths: acceptance or overcoming. One in which you accept what is, the other in which you say, "I will push on and overcome." Either path leads to one road, which is release, but the outcomes are totally different. Each person sees things in different lights. Where one sees folly, another sees success. "Which fork you take in life is up to you. Whether it is belief in a higher power, or just belief itself, in a corporeal power or incorporeal power, our paths may diverge in this, but yet it all stems from our desires. In the end, we ask ourselves at the end of our search, "are we become better for the experience or made lesser for it?""

"There can be "wuthering" in the opposite direction. I found out yesterday that I got a full ride scholarship to any school in Colorado and while two days ago I found out some terrible news about my grandmother, it really puts it into perspective. We have so many times to reshape our future and sometimes it's going to be terrible but sometimes it's a key moment that's going to give you so many opportunities. Trust that both exist."

“Sometimes, even when it's been a very long time, you still have those moments. I've been diagnosed with Crohn's disease for a decade now. It's well managed, I'm on drugs that help greatly, and I'm considered in remission and have been for 6 years. Of course, this doesn't mean everything is perfect - I still get the odd flare-up, and I know the foods that will cause the cactus-pain, but it's not often enough or for long enough to be considered an "active disease". So, every now and then I feel like it's not real. I know I have to go to those appointments and get my blood tested and have my infusions, and I know I have to avoid certain foods, but even knowing all these things for such a long time, I still get breakthrough feelings that it's not my reality. That it's not my future. But I still do the things. I go to the appointments and avoid the foods because that's what will keep me healthy, and it has become normal. And the thoughts that once caused extreme anxiety and stress are now everyday thoughts that aren't so scary anymore.”

“I had an image in my mind for a lot of a similar time, of me walking along a viaduct when suddenly the pillars in front of me collapse, leaving me to stare into an uncertain void. I have mostly come to a new normal now, though I have had to settle for much less than I would have liked for my life, but the uncertainty still remains in many ways. I can't commit to events in advance because I don't know how I will feel on the day, I don't know what to imagine the future to be like because this could get better or worse at any point, and I can't plan more than a few months ahead because which decisions I will be able to make then depend heavily on how much I manage to do in the meantime. It really feels, in the current situation, that the collapse of the viaduct and the kinds of uncertainty that come from it have now been extended to the whole world. It is a strange and scary time, but I think Hank is right in saying that we will find a new normal, even if it is difficult and takes some time.”

“There is a German term for this in theology and sociology called “Kontingenzerfahrung,” which means, “life is unpredictable and the future uncertain, but usually we aren't too much affected by that.” But when experiences such as illnesses, trauma and death have a deep impact, we can't help but acknowledge it and find a way to cope and move on.”

“Sometimes I still grieve when I'm in a rough patch, because forever (at least my forever, the rest of my life) feels like a very long time to suffer. It's important to learn how to let yourself be happy when you aren't in pain, instead of wasting that time worrying about your next low or flare up. Learning how to do that takes practice, but it is achievable. When considering the good amidst all the pain, I often think to myself, “It's a good life Hazel Grace,” a quote by John Green, from “The Fault in Our Stars.” Because even with all the pain, I still believe in hope, I still believe in love, and (after years of therapy, trying various medications, learning self-care, and adopting an exercise routine), I finally believe that life is worth living.”

“My life has been almost a decade of “social distancing” because of chronic illness. The me from 10 years ago would imagine the life I have now to be unbearable and probably wouldn't have thought I'd survive (emotionally) and certainly not been able to smile and laugh and feel happiness if you had asked me back then. But I have learned that we can get used to A LOT. And with that, also learning I can survive things I didn't think I could have before. And I suffered with PTSD, depression, and suicidal thoughts (and attempts) for the decade before I became physically ill. So building this resilience was NOT EASY BY A LONG SHOT, and I'm grateful I had all the support I needed. In this time, I am constantly thinking about the people who are spending this quarantine time alone, like I was before I got married, and my heart breaks for you all. But please know, this will not last forever. And we never know how strong we are until we are forced to be. You can do so much that you never thought you could. And it



may be painful, very painful at times, but you will be so proud of yourself when it's over, and you will gain so much confidence in your ability to withstand hardship, that it will make you braver for the rest of your life. Only by living through hard and painful things do we get that strength. So keep surviving".

## Famous Quotes

Here are famous quotes that viewers shared to illustrate some of what they and others may be experiencing:

"After a great blow, or crisis, after the first shock and then after the nerves have stopped screaming and twitching, you settle down to the new condition of things and feel that all possibility of change has been used up. You adjust yourself, and are sure that the new equilibrium is for eternity. . . But if anything is certain it is that no story is ever over, for the story which we think is over is only a chapter in a story which will not be over, and it isn't the game that is over, it is just an inning, and that game has a lot more than nine innings. When the game stops it will be called on account of darkness. But it is a long day." -- *Robert Penn Warren.*

"Some Americans are in denial, and others are feeling despair. Both sentiments are understandable. We all have a choice to make. We can look at the coming fire and let it burn. We can hunker down and hope to wait it out—or we can work together to get through it with as little damage as possible. This country has faced massive threats before and risen to the challenge; we can do it again. We just need to decide to make it happen." *Aaron Carroll, This Is How We Can Beat the Coronavirus. March 19, 2020, The Atlantic.*

"Anticipatory grief is that feeling we get about what the future holds when we're uncertain. Usually it centers on death. We feel it when someone gets a dire diagnosis or when we have the normal thought that we'll lose a parent someday. Anticipatory grief is also more broadly imagined futures. There is a storm coming. There's something bad out there. With a virus, this kind of grief is so confusing for people. Our primitive mind knows something bad is happening, but you can't see it. This breaks our sense of safety. We're feeling that loss of safety." *David Kessler, That Discomfort You're Feeling Is Grief, Scott Berinato, March 23, 2020, The Atlantic.*

"The best laid schemes of mice and men go aft astray and leave us naught but pain and sorrow for promised joy." *Robert Burns 1785 poem, "To a Mouse."*

"It is like walking up the stairs to your bedroom in the dark and thinking there is one more stair than there is. Your foot falls down, through the air, and there is a sickly moment of dark surprise as you try to readjust the way you thought of things. The Baudelaire orphans were crying not only for their Uncle Monty, but for their own parents, and this dark and curious feeling of falling that accompanies every great loss."— *Lemony Snicket, The Reptile Room*

"Acceptance doesn't mean resignation. It means understanding that something is what it is and that there's got to be a way through it."- *Michael J. Fox*

"Everything's different, My head in the clouds, I hit this corner, With my foot on the gas, I started sliding, I lose it, Everything's different, just like that Oh my God, wait and see, What will soon become of me?"

Frozen heart, Screaming wheels, Does that screaming come from me?" --Dave Matthews Band song "So Damn Lucky"

"When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us." -- Alexander Graham Bell

"Everything is survivable. Except for the last thing." --John Green Paper Towns

"May God be between you and harm in all the empty places you must walk." Original translation from English into 18th Dynasty Egyptian.

"Every pain needs a name." – Title of a Jeff Pickles episode

"Nothing's sad till it's over. Then everything is." --Steven Moffat

"Where do we find certainty? Faith deepens where our resources end. When what we normally do doesn't work, that is a sacred moment where we look up. It is fostered by significant silence with God. That priority has to be cultivated, because of the busy-ness of everyday life." --Linda Powell Pruitt

### **The Thing Is**

to love life, to love it even  
when you have no stomach for it  
and everything you've held dear  
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,  
your throat filled with the silt of it.  
When grief sits with you, its tropical heat  
thickening the air, heavy as water  
more fit for gills than lungs;  
when grief weights you like your own flesh  
only more of it, an obesity of grief,  
you think, *How can a body withstand this?*  
Then you hold life like a face  
between your palms, a plain face,  
no charming smile, no violet eyes,  
and you say, yes, I will take you  
I will love you, again.

-- Ellen Bass