FLEX

A prompt for engagement

by Cory Urlich

What path are you on? It might be a way of living, a conversation, an interest you are following or simply the activity in front of you. You may know exactly where you want to go and what path to take, or perhaps you are completely unsure of what to do. Wherever you begin, there is an opportunity to become aware of how you are participating in life.

We can keep following a path while forgetting why we are on it, or where it is taking us. Familiarity can carry us forward while our purpose slips out of view. Remembering to FLEX offers a moment to reconnect with that purpose and consider whether the direction still makes sense.

To FLEX is to Follow, Lead and Explore. Follow a path, be a leader and explore the possibilities. These actions can work together, in any order.

Follow a path. Choose a path, or simply follow the one you're on. Either way, engage with its direction.

A path may be a commitment you've already made, or a possibility you'd like to explore. Engaging with our path can help us recognize the direction we are taking and what is influencing it. We might follow our own intentions, someone else's example, a familiar habit or a feeling that draws us toward something.

The seven principles of Huna offer another way to explore this process. 'Ike, the principle of awareness, invites us to notice how our experience of the world is shaped by what we perceive and remember. We can ask what we think is leading us, then notice what actually shapes our choices. Makia adds focus: "Energy flows where attention goes." Once we recognize a direction, we can give it attention and notice what that attention encourages.

Be a leader. Be the leader of yourself and consider who else may be led by example.

Leadership begins in the way we guide our own participation. We can choose how to respond, what to encourage and which values to express. Mana, the Huna principle of power, brings attention to this capacity for influence. Confidence can grow from remembered experience: we recognize something we can do, act on it, and learn from what happens.

Our example also becomes part of other people's experience. They may recognize values that are meaningful within their culture, see something they would like to try for themselves, or find the confidence to lead in a new direction. You can even lead by demonstrating who is worth following. Follow and Lead begin to work together in the same choice.

When we want to go together, we need a direction we can agree to share. Cooperation involves clear, concise communication about what each person wants and how we will proceed. Aloha

brings care and appreciation into that relationship. We can enjoy one another's strengths, learn from each other and allow room for growth.

Explore the possibilities. Explore within and around you. Notice possibilities, consider alternatives, learn new things, and make it an adventure.

Exploration can happen within the path we are already following. We might try a different approach, ask a question or notice a detail that changes how we understand the situation. Kala brings freedom and connection into view, inviting us to consider possibilities beyond the assumptions we have become accustomed to.

Flexibility grows through familiarity mixed with adventure. Familiar experience helps us produce consistent results and build confidence. Variation gives us new things to notice. As we find connections between experiences, we become better able to recognize what fits the circumstances. We can become familiar with adaptation itself.

Returning to this process helps sustain that familiarity. Regularity can have a rhythm that includes long gaps. When we return to a practice, we can draw on earlier experience and discover how it applies now.

FLEX also draws attention to how we feel. We can notice tension, pleasure, interest and what we recognize as good. That awareness can motivate a response, such as changing our pace or even adjusting our entire approach. Thought can prompt movement, and movement can give us something new to notice. The mind and body participate in the same experience.

Manawa brings this participation into the present. We work with the awareness, experience and possibilities available now. In a conversation, that might mean following what someone is saying, choosing a thoughtful response and exploring an idea together. On a quiet day, you might choose rest as your path, shape the day around what you enjoy and explore an interest at your own pace.

How do we recognize whether our path is taking us where we want to go? Pono offers a useful reference: "Effectiveness is the measure of truth." We can compare the outcomes we want with what our actions are producing, drawing on experience to notice progress or a need for adjustment. Necessity may prompt us to change our approach, while the spirit of adventure invites us to explore other possibilities. That evaluation helps us recognize and refine our values. We learn which behaviors produce experiences we wish to cultivate and how our actions affect ourselves and others.

Sometimes evaluation confirms the path we are already on. Reassurance and confidence can be useful outcomes in their own right. Remembering to FLEX while absorbed in an activity may simply renew our focus, remind us how we want to influence it and keep alternatives within our field of awareness. To continue can be a deliberate choice.

The letters of FLEX can offer another reminder. This reading grew from exploring letter symbolism in Polly Cady's Graphology and Your Hidden Code. Here, F suggests looking ahead,

L reaching for understanding, E remaining open to information, and X bringing opposing directions into balance. This echoes the way following and leading can support one another, with exploration helping us discover how they work together.

Follow a path. Be a leader. Explore the possibilities. Notice what is available to you, and discover how you can join in. Learn new things, grow for the joy of growing, and make it an adventure.

The seven Huna principles

Seven principles of Huna, with prompts for applying them through FLEX.

‘Ike · Awareness. Notice how you perceive and participate.

Kala · Freedom. Recognize choice, connection and possibility.

Makia · Focus. Give your attention direction.

Manawa · Now. Engage with what is available in the present.

Aloha · Love. Appreciate, care and enjoy.

Mana · Power. Recognize and exercise your influence.

Pono · Effectiveness. Learn from what your actions produce.