Do you know the idiom ‘cross that bridge when you come to it’?
Do you know what ‘cross that bridge when you come to it’ means?

When we say we will ‘cross that bridge when we come to it’ we mean that we will wait until a problem arises before we deal with it.

Often we anticipate problems, but they might not actually happen and so sometimes it is wise to wait until a problem arises to see if it does in fact happen, and deal with it if it does.

Another phrase that means the same thing is: ‘don’t count your chickens before they hatch’. This means that we shouldn’t make plans or rely on something happening until it does.

The difference here is that this idiom is normally linked to something positive, whereas crossing a bridge refers to a problem.
Origins: the story

This phrase dates back to at least the 1800s, when people would travel on country roads on horseback or in carriages.

Bridges cannot be crossed before they arise in the road. The reason that this phrase originated is that bridges in remote locations may not be as stable as ones in more built up areas and so their reliability couldn’t be determined until you were there.

So crossing a bridge when you come to it relates to dealing with a problem when you reach it, not anticipating and planning for it. The problem may or may not be there!
Examples

1. Robyn kept wondering what would happen if she had failed her exam, but she knew should could only cross that bridge when she came to it.

2. The storm looked like it might cause the planes to be cancelled. The airline said they would cross that bridge if it came to it and tried to reassure the passengers that they would go on holiday one way or another.
Consider

• When have you waited to cross a bridge if you came to it?

• Did you decide to wait before planning or did someone advise you to?

• Did the problem take place?
• How did it affect how you felt before, during and after the situation?

• When might it be useful to wait and cross a bridge if you come to it?
• Are there any times that we shouldn’t wait and should plan for something just incase?