

## Never Let a Good Crisis go to Waste

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“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” Albert Einstein

Occasionally, there is a crisis in our lives when things are flipped upside-down, offering a big chance to make major changes. We are presented with a possibility for a radical restructuring of our lives. Such a transformation involves not only the outer work of making changes in the external elements of life but more importantly, requires the willingness to let go of cherished beliefs that no longer serve us. Surrendering these attachments can be a wrenching experience and not one that many of us would opt for under less dire circumstances. Letting go of familiar patterns can result in a feeling of excruciating vulnerability as if one were standing naked and defenseless in the face of danger.

The courage to face the unknown gets developed in the process of experience. As one woman said, “You can’t wait for the fear to go away, because it doesn’t. You just have to step into the challenge one step at a time and take the fear with you.” The willingness to choose the path of transformation generally isn’t made when things are going well. It’s not chosen because it seems like a good idea, but rather when everything else has been tried, we feel like our back is up against the wall, and we’ve run out of all of our familiar options.

We are challenged to let go of old beliefs and behaviors that served us in our previous life. Yet we have no guarantee that things will be better in the future. There may be absolute certainty that “I can’t live this way any longer.” When people ignore that voice, the consequence is a kind of soul death. Sometimes it can feel like we have to risk our lives to keep our souls alive. Here are some questions that can guide our transformation:

- Am I living the life I want to live?
- If not, why not?
- What needs to change?
- Do I have the courage and motivation to make that change?
- Am I giving myself fully to my closest relationships?
- Am I intentionally making conversations meaningful with those I care for?
- How might I give more care and receive more affection from the relationships that are important to me?
- Am I enjoying my work?
- If not, what changes am I willing to make so that I derive more satisfaction from working?
- Am I managing money in a way that gives me peace of mind?
- Do I take adequate care of my body?
- In what ways could I show greater respect to my body?
- Do I take time for creative expression?

- Am I weaving enough fun and play into my life?
- Am I sufficiently contributing my unique gifts to those around me?

Be sure to add your own questions and concerns to this starter kit. The crisis can draw attention to an underlying imbalance in our lives. The way we respond to the symptoms of discontent determines whether we'll breakthrough to new possibilities to become stronger at the broken places or be immobilized by fear.

It is not the specific nature of the ordeal that we experience that is the most significant factor in shaping our development. Rather, it is our willingness to expose ourselves directly to the heat of the crisis to honestly face ourselves. We can consciously choose to look within when breakdowns occur, pledging to cease and desist from practices such as withdrawing, grudge-holding, blaming, vindictiveness, punitiveness, and condemnation that solidify and reinforce our negative moods.

The acceptance of our need to do our own "inner work" in order to have a more fulfilling life comes from a highly developed sense of personal responsibility. This level of responsibility allows for our greatest personal power which elevates the quality of our life experience. It also allows us to impact the lives of others in a life-affirming way.

Our unwillingness to settle for superficial solutions to problems has its roots in our inner world, not in our outer life. Refusing to settle for minor repairs allows things to fall apart, and then to start from there.

Resilience not only allows us to rebound from losses more quickly, but this quality grows within us. We become able to more accurately assess the risk level of new behaviors and to explore new possibilities. When our level of self-trust deepens over time, we enjoy a more interesting life. Self-trust deepens our confidence in our ability to recover and grow from our life experiences. This awareness leads to a decreased need to control, and an easing of our attachment to specific outcomes. Letting go becomes, rather than something that we need to do, something that effortlessly occurs when the impulse towards control gets activated. Neutralizing these reactive patterns creates less stress which promotes greater happiness.

When we feel happy, there is a greater willingness to try new things, open to new possibilities, and engage life more fully. This creates a pattern of passionate aliveness rather than one of control and protection. As the growth cycle overrides the protective cycle, the driving focus in life moves from surviving to thriving. No longer preoccupied with survival-based concerns, we anticipate our future both long-term, as well as immediate, with a sense of eager anticipation rather than anxiety or dread. Life shows up as a series of adventures rather than ordeals, and we can't wait to jump out of bed in the morning because we're filled with curiosity about the abundant possibilities that await us.