

NEWS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

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HOW TO USE CRISIS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

I recently read an interesting article in the Wall Street Journal by Bruce Feiler titled "Learning to Conquer Life's Crises," which discusses the phases of going through a crisis. According to the author, who has researched how people handle crisis, the average person has three to five big destabilizing events in their adult life and these events create life earthquakes which then create life transformations. According to Feiler, these events, I will call BIG EVENTS, last on average five years. Most BIG EVENTS involve our relationships, followed by our identities, beliefs, careers and bodies. What is

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different now is we are all experiencing a BIG EVENT together because of the COVID crisis. This hasn't happened since World War II and the Great Depression.

According to Feiler, there are three emotional stages you go through with a BIG EVENT. The stages are the Long Goodbye, the Messy Middle and the New Beginning. People go through these stages at different paces and some get stuck longer in one stage than another.

For example, some people are quick to get out of the Long Goodbye but get stuck in the Messy Middle or vice versa. Feiler offers some tools for making each stage easier to go through. He says to make the Long Goodbye stage easier, the first thing to do is to accept our emotions. When I lost my office to six feet of water, courtesy of Hurricane Harvey, I had an emotional meltdown in the Long Goodbye stage.



Feiler says the emotions in this stage are fear and sadness. I agree. I was Freaked Out about not having a physical office and sad over losing much of my art that hung there.



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The Messy Middle means change from the ways things have been to a new way, which can be disorienting and disheartening. Are you as tired as me of hearing about our new COVID normal? My emotional side wants to fight about the idea of a New Normal. But I need to get over my bad baby self and accept change in order to get through the stage of the Messy Middle. Understanding that change from how things used to be, to how they are now, is just part of life. In other words, “Get Over It Carla” and accept that change has happened. And before you freak out too much Carla, remember that after 9/11 people still flew on planes and after the stock market crashed, people still bought stocks, so it isn’t the end of the world although it may seem like it. And Carla to self, “Remember that stress raises cortisol levels (cortisol is the stress hormone) and high cortisol levels increase your risk of having a bad reaction to COVID.”

Feiler found people in the Messy Middle cope with this period by shedding things, such as mind-sets and routines and create new skills and attitudes. For me in the Messy Middle of Hurricane Harvey, I got better with my computer skills, since I no longer had an assistant and I enjoyed being with other mediators since I was working out of a mediation center. I am now back in a new office (which I like even better than the old one) with a new assistant that I am crazy about. Moral of the story/experience is that in hindsight, the Harvey crisis was in many ways a very positive one for me. I would never have believed it when I was an emotional nervous freaked out mess.



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The last stage is one of New Beginning. Feiler says this may seem the easiest but it isn't so for some people. He states some techniques used would be to celebrate the New Beginning by having a memento to represent it or moving or changing in some way. He recommends viewing the New Beginning as a new chapter in your life.



Say out loud, "I used to be _____. Then I went through a change. Now I am this." A new me, better than ever!

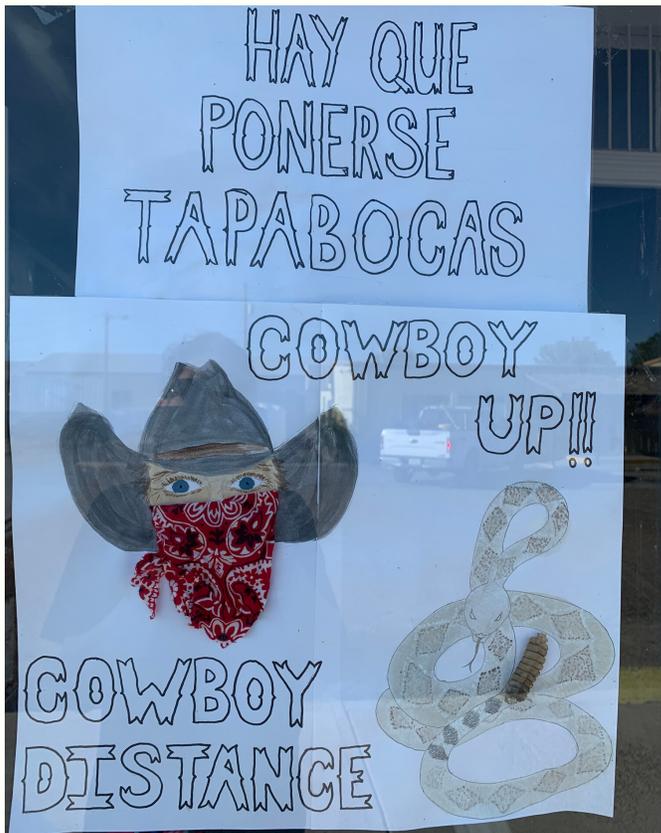
It is hard when we are in a scary time to view this COVID crisis as a way to make positive transformations. I know how hard this is to say much less do. I used to think I had to hit the bottom and ram my head hard against a cement floor before I would wake up and change. Sometimes this is what crisis does for us. Crisis makes us change. Crisis causes us to pivot and as we all know but hate on some level, everything can change on a dime. So, stay calm, don't deny your emotions in this very turbulent time. Know and believe that with this change you will come out on the other side a new, stronger and better person. And don't stress, it raises your cortisol levels.



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INAPPROPRIATE THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

I am on board full steam for wearing a mask. If this will help it is a small thing to do. So my inappropriate thought of the month is not meant as a negative against wearing a mask. Wear one! No, this is an inappropriate thought about masks meant to be funny. So here goes: I can't help thinking people look like dogs with a snout when they wear those masks that protrude at the nose.



I need to get one like that since I bet they are more comfortable and I do love dogs. No, it just makes me smile because wearing this type of mask gives you a protruding snout.

Who knew COVID would give us the option of wearing a bandana across our face so we can be western outlaws or a simple white cotton one suggesting a more bland statement, (translation we have nothing good to say about it) or a solid black one if we feel like being dangerous or one of the protruding ones that give you a snout like

our faithful pals, dogs. Maybe by wearing a mask like a snout we will not only look like a dog but be nicer like dogs. I am ready to give it a try!



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WHAT BEING KIND CAN DO FOR YOU

Maybe because of COVID there seems to be a rash of new books about kindness. One I saw recently but didn't read is "Your Hidden Superpower: The Kindness That Makes You Unbeatable at Work and Connects You With Anyone". Hmmm I thought, an entire book on kindness? Can kindness make you unbeatable? I don't know about being unbeatable but I do know we should all be kind. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" we all know. So the importance of being kind is nothing new but since everyone right now is spun up with emotions perhaps it is good timing to reflect on it.

I was in Whole Foods last week lined up at the coffee bar to get a cappuccino (with my mask on) and it became more and more apparent that the barista was preparing everyone's drink except mine, even the people behind me. Boom-- Instant irritation. So with a shitty attitude, I asked her tersely what happened to my drink. The barista began stating over and over that she was new and it was hectic and she was new and it was hectic and she was new



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and it was hectic. So already irritated, I now became increasingly grumpy. I even thought, “Why do people over apologize/make excuses? Does saying it repeatedly mean I am going to accept it more so than just saying it once?” My phrase for this is “Guilty dogs bark more.” Does this phrase make much sense, maybe not, but repeated excuses don’t make things better, but I digress. The point is I had negative thoughts swirling through my head, such as “Quit apologizing and just frigging fix my drink.”

So out of line and irritated, I said to the barista, “ I have been waiting a long time and can you please fix my drink now.” The barista replied, “What was your order again?” Blood pressure rising and with extreme effort controlling myself, I managed to mutter “cappuccino” without exploding but I am sure my face registered disgust. The happy chirpy barista went flat, just like a balloon that has been popped.

As I waited for her to make the coffee, I self-reflecting on my bad behavior. I asked myself, “What the hell are you doing Carla? You have nothing pressing. You are not in a rush. Why would you do that to this nice lady.” Self-reproach began raining down on me. (I am good at beating myself up.) So with a snap I walked back to the counter and said to the barista, “I need to apologize to you. I was rude. You are doing a great job. I know everything is harder when you wear a mask. I was way out of line.” Then I made an excuse and said, “This COVID is making me crazy/grumpy so please accept my apology.” She instantly brightened



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up and gave me a big smile that I knew was there even if it was under her mask. She felt better and even more important to this story, I felt instantly better.



Another example involves rude drivers and I am sure I am guilty of being one too. Haven't you been driving and some rude/dangerous driver, whips in and out of your lane, or refuses to let you change lanes or cuts you off at the red light. And haven't you in those circumstances gotten irritated and maybe even cussed under your breath or hopefully not shot them the finger

because that can get you killed. And when this has happened, did you feel better? Not really. In truth it just increased your irritation.

I was in a small town recently visiting my parents. I am not saying the name of the town because it has zero going for it, in my opinion, and I couldn't move away fast enough. I'm sitting in a restaurant with my parents and a couple walks up to the table and spoke to my parents. It took me several minutes before I realized I went to school with them. They looked completely different, having gained massive amounts of weight. But even so, here they were, still in a town I consider terrible and weighing way too much. But and this is a big BUT, they



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were so happy and cheerful. They exuded kindness. They were happy and so kind and gracious to my father that has Alzheimer's. Their kindness and graciousness and I have to say it, happiness made me reflect. What the hell was I doing being so grumpy? I lived in a better place, only had an extra 10 lbs. and yet here I was, Ms. Grumpy. There was no excuse for my grumpiness and the only one suffering from my grumpiness was me.

So what is the moral of this story. I don't need to read a book to know that the benefit of being kind is really helping yourself, even if a side benefit is it helps others. The real gift is what you give yourself. You feel better when you are nice and kind. Being a jerk isn't making you feel any better. Being rude to someone, even if they deserve it, doesn't make you feel better, it makes you feel worse.



And why as humans, do we do this, when it makes us feel worse? Makes no sense. Being kind makes you feel better and kindness equals happiness. If you are kind, you are happier. I don't know about making you "unbeatable" but who needs to compete when you are happy. Your kindness makes you become a positive addition to the world which this world needs now more than ever. No Debbie Downers allowed.



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