



## ReVisioning Chaos

*When we are no longer able to change a situation,  
we are challenged to change ourselves.*

Viktor Frankel

Unrelenting chaos blasted into my life at gale force. For several years, I was blindsided non-stop with unexpected maladies, dashed expectations, and disappointing relationships.

“What did I do wrong? How did I not see this coming?” These two questions dominated my conscious mind. Convinced that the chaos reflected some deep flaw within me, I became obsessed with finding the offending thought form, “thinking” it was the key to magically dematerializing the chaos. Life would then be smooth sailing. Like Simon Legree, my Inner Critic hammered me. “What the fuck is wrong with you? Are you ever going to get life right?”

No amount of soul searching made an iota of difference. Like the cloud above Pig Pen, chaos followed me. Unlike Pig Pen, I judged it and myself because of it. I’m smart—a teacher, a therapist, spiritually savvy, relatively conscious. I “should” be able to figure this out, I told myself.

The truth is I judged chaos. My failing grade in life was exposed for all to see. It was shameful and uncomfortable. The disappointments and losses were demoralizing, and my post-game analysis was exhausting. I was woefully stuck, spinning my wheels.

Uncertainty rarely left my side. Things and people I had counted on let me down right and left. I felt vulnerable, out of control, often close to the edge. I lived in loin-girding mode, not knowing who or what to trust. And, like Pac Man, my personal mayhem gobbled up my creative energy and time.

While I preached and taught about pushing beyond one’s comfort zone, I was living Richard Bach’s quote, “You teach best what you most need to learn.” I was so busy resisting the chaos that it never occurred to me to just ride the bronco, to become one with it.

Nothing I did kept the cascading chaos at bay. I analyzed and re-analyzed each situation. Nothing and no one could help me make “sense” of these repeated onslaughts. No alchemical formula calmed the storm.

Finally, in an example of “When the student is ready, the teacher appears,” an email arrived with links to an article by two of my favorite wisdom teachers, Hal Stone, PhD, psychologist, and his psychologist wife, Sidra Stone. Together, they developed Voice Dialogue, a method of becoming conscious of the many selves within us. Now 85, Hal has been living with a myriad of life-threatening health issues. In the recent article, they relate and describe what Hal has



learned. A master of dreams, Hal recounts two, one of which was about his attempts to organize the chaos in his life.

Hal's dream was emphatic. It isn't up to us to organize chaos. In the dream he was told, "It is not your place at this time in your life to try to organize Chaos. We [Inner Voice] know how to do that and we will organize the Chaos for you. When you feel it is time to do something then you will know what to do and then do it and it will go very easily."

OMG! My chaos wasn't a black stain, an embarrassing, shameful "shanda." Nothing was radically wrong with me. Chaos, Hal's dream emphasized, is a mystery—to be lived. As he put it, "It is' and 'I am' and that is the way of life."

Hal's dream jolted me out of a culturally hardwired belief, an energetic gas-guzzler that preyed on my self-worth. My identification and attachment to an ideal of "smooth sailing" all but guaranteed chronic hurt, disappointment, and self-recrimination—with no way out. What we resist persists.

As I pored over Hal's essay, I began to relax. Beating myself up over the chaos kept me miserable. It seemed plausible that accepting it would put an end to my Monday morning quarterbacking. And maybe, just maybe, viewing chaos in this new light, essentially stripping it of any value judgment, might free up the energy I was frittering away to use in creative and productive ways.

Soon my dysfunctional groupthink came into focus. Scrambling to expunge chaos exposed my very human desire for certainty and security—an illusory mind game, a chimera that repudiated my supposed faith.

God doesn't make mistakes. At some level, I knew that. That is, until life threw me painful curveballs. And then, my Inner Critic mounted a war with the wiser part of me, and won. Of course the upheaval was my fault. I was conditioned to think that way as a child.

When I couldn't find the offending flaw, I'd fixate on finding the gift in the shit. If I could do that, I reasoned, maybe the fear and anxiety would lift, and take the chaos with it. Never a patient person, I wanted answers now. What I really wanted was relief, to be immediately healed. Then, apropos of magical thinking, my life would surely be smooth sailing.

Though I was beginning to see how my mirroring Einstein's definition of insanity was perpetuating the chaos, and how absurd my mindset was, I still hadn't tied it up in a box with a pretty bow.



We badly want to make sense of the unknown. We desperately want an orderly world, that is, orderly by our standards. Faith isn't easy in the midst of turmoil. Just ask Job.

Okay. I get it. Resolving chaos with the mind will never work. Habitually attempting to understand it is a total waste of time and energy. As the Borg from Star Trek so aptly put it, "Resistance is futile."

"It is and I am and that is the way of life."

Although I'm not there yet, the truth that accepting chaos might be liberating is worming its way into my psyche. Maybe chaos is God's way of teaching all of us to give up our need to control our world, a path toward reassessing our values. Instead of assuming that chaos is a damning condemnation of my worthiness, I considered how re-configuring my inner hard drive might pan out.

Resigned now to the reality that the human experience is ever changing, rarely stable, and certainly uncertain. It's the nature of life. The question is whether I can surrender when life's vicissitudes feel like an assault? Both within me and on our planet. That what looks like chaos is the precursor to rebirth? And that resisting it or calling it names keeps us and our world stuck in it?

To become a diamond, carbon must undergo extreme heat and intense pressure. What if that is true of us as well? That reaching our highest potential demands that we, too, must be subjected to the same oppressive elements. That the physical security and certain future we covet is merely an unattainable and impossible dream that sets us up to be disappointed time and again. What if chaos is meant to detach us from our egocentric need to life serving us and into us serving life?

What if the teeming personal and global chaos is God's way of shaking us out of a collective slumber in which fear, greed, and the desire for power perpetuate man's inhumanity to man, and with it, unremitting chaos?

Without an emotional charge on the concept of chaos, I suspect it will matter less. Once I accept whatever is transpiring in my life, judgment lifts. Chaos will have ceased having its way with me. The story I have repeatedly told myself will have lost its grip on me.

Now that's freedom.