

# 'Crisis is a process of birthing our higher and deeper potential'

With conscious evolution, every crisis can become an opportunity, says **Yehuda Tagar**

**N**o one likes crisis. It is painful and damaging, creating loss and loneliness, destroying life as we know it. The nature of crisis is to catch us unprepared, unready. It ends dreams, shatters self-image and is the very opposite of safety, security and comfort. We devote much of our time and energy to preventing the possibility of crisis and to maximising security in our lives - much of the Western-oriented economy and social structure is devoted to this.

Yet crisis is a major opportunity for necessary change and development. We are born in crisis, we die in crisis and in between, in the transitions between many of our life-changing phases, we experience crisis. The baby loses its natural environment when it is born - no more oxygen arrives through the umbilical cord. She experiences the danger of death as she does not know there is another way to breathe. She becomes blue for lack of oxygen, then she cries, breathes and a new life begins.

According to Perls, the founder of Gestalt therapy, every human crisis has an element of the 'blue baby'. The old way of surviving no longer works, leaving you feeling as if you will die. You as you are cannot make it - you as you are *has* to die. There is another way to live but you are not aware of it yet. It lies within you as dormant potential. You have to activate this potential in order to survive, and to do so you have to change and become another human being, the one who is the next stage of your development. Once you have gone through this change you will not wish to go back to where you were before. The baby does not wish to become a foetus again - there is a world out there to discover. But the crisis has to come first. Seen from this point of view, crisis is a process of birthing our higher and deeper potential out of the raw material of our old way of being.

Crisis can, of course, also destroy potential. It can destroy opportunity, love, family, parenthood, livelihood, home, communities and countries. Those of us living in safe and stable environments have the luxury of being able to work on social, political, economic and personal development, on transforming crises into opportunity for human development. Because we *can* do so, we *should* do it for ourselves and for advancing humanity. But I also acknowledge the ongoing crises in many regions of the world in which wars and conflicts are disasters from which new opportunities may only arise much later.

For those of us not dealing with life-threatening situations, a crisis can be the most powerful opportunity for change and development. An end can become a new beginning, although not always - initiative is required in order to give a new meaning to the suffering afflicted by crisis.

## Separation

I often work with couples in crisis. Part of the old love story has come to an end - they cannot renew the original love, intimacy, communication, goodwill, motivation to stay together, energy or trust. When the decision is made by one or both to separate, the couple has an opportunity to separate humanely, minimising the impact on any children and the couple's finances, creating a new separated relationship and parenting contract. Very often, if the separation is successfully done, communication between the partners can improve remarkably, something that may have seemed impossible while they were together. New life has now been created for both of them, separately.

When the wish of the couple is to recover from the crisis, to stay together and rebuild their relationship, then the dynamics of activating the hidden opportunity in the

crisis becomes the only way forward. Both individuals have to be willing to change, to become upgraded versions of themselves. If they both do that, then and only then can they heal and recreate their relationship. When they both take up this challenge, a new personal development takes place, leading to rebirth and renewal.

## Individual

For this to happen, each has to take personal responsibility for their own inner life. Conflicts are created together but overcoming them depends on individual change. Automatic defensive reactions - and the habitual unconscious projections they trigger in each other - must be acknowledged, owned and transformed. An upgrade of communication must take place, allowing each to hear what the other is saying, rather than what they fear, hope or assume each other will say. If expectations and manipulations are replaced by clear, honest communication, a new contract for the relationship is created, one which they might never have experienced before.

When forgiveness is chosen and full-heartedly embraced, along with gratitude and appreciation of each other, both individuals will change. They become, individually, the upgraded self, the new 'I'. The crisis becomes an opportunity. This process requires skills and goodwill but it is possible, and when achieved it is a real step in human conscious evolution.

When such a commitment is not possible, each individual has a choice in how they deal with the crisis on their own. It takes courage - the courage to embrace emotional pain to allow it to heal. This is the opportunity hidden in a crisis. This is what happened to me after the end of my first marriage many years ago. I felt like everything I had and identified with



was destroyed. It was a death process that lasted several years. I had to take hold of whatever was left of my wounded self and use it as a foundation for building a new life. I looked for a 'destiny hospital' for emergency healing. There was no such hospital - I had to create it for myself. In that process of self-healing, I became a healer. I used poetry, drama, primitive elements of existential processing and, above all, facing my wounds daily and nightly, without trying to escape them. I developed self-empathy.

Becoming my own healer became the foundation of my life task - what I managed to do for myself, I transformed into a method I could teach to others, which I called 'psychophonetics'. This would never have happened if not for my life crisis and my striving to heal from it.

The crisis in my life story came at immense cost - the sacrifice in my personal life, parenthood, family, security and comfort was huge. But it seems to me that new creation requires sacrifice. Something has to die for something else to be born.

Anna,\* a client in her mid-30s, came to me asking for help, saying her life was in ruins. Her husband had left her without warning, restricting his communications to custody and

financial arrangements through lawyers. She was experiencing deep pain and grief over the destruction of her family and future. She felt frightened and powerless and was barely coping with the basic tasks of life. She had no idea how to face the hostile process that she knew was coming, and felt she had no power to speak for herself.

I encouraged her to feel everything fully. There is no other ground to stand on in the middle of crisis other than the reality of your own experience even when that reality is steeped in severe pain - you have to own it, feel it and acknowledge it. Then I encouraged her to imagine, standing in the distance, the woman that she wanted to be when she was in court the week after our session. She could see herself - strong, upright, grounded, dependent on no one's approval, taking full responsibility for her life, speaking up for her rights, her heart strong and open. The picture was clear and real. I asked her to move to that place in the room and to embody that woman. Her whole posture changed - she became taller, stronger, more upright and more relaxed. She imagined, from that position, looking everyone involved in the upcoming court case in the eyes, and speaking from a place of calm rather than anger. From that position, I asked her to

look back at herself in the chair where she had been before, consumed by agonising pain. She came closer. She could see a very young version of herself, like a young child. She told that child she would take care of her, and in doing so became her own parent and the woman that she never before managed to be. The crisis was becoming an opportunity in front of my eyes.

In Mandarin Chinese the word for crisis is *wei ji*. *Wei* means danger and *ji* means a crucial moment of change. It does not mean opportunity, as some people assume, but a drastic change. That much is inevitable - the crisis does not become an opportunity automatically. Many personal crises do not become opportunities for change. People can get stuck in the trauma of the crisis and not heal or move from it for many years. But the crisis *can* become an opportunity through conscious initiative, requiring a complete experience of the wound, loss, grief and cost of it all, requiring a new initiative to create a new self. On that basis the crucial point of change, the *ji*, can become an opportunity for new creation of self.

In his song 'Anthem', Leonard Cohen sang that the crack in everything is how the light gets in. Sometimes we have to have a crack in the old self for the light of the potential new self to enter. In psychophonetics we call it conscious evolution. ■

\*Client's name and identifiable details have been changed.



About the author

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