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Wei Ji Chinese symbol for chaos included danger and crossroads, or decision point.

Pivoting yourself and your business in a rapidly changing world. By Dr. Linda Liang

I remember that ride at Riverview, an old amusement park in Chicago, now gone, called the Rotor, where you spin and spin in a circle, faster and faster, and the floor drops out from under you. Somehow you stay afloat through centrifugal forces, your body pressed up against the wall. You can hardly move. Does this feel familiar? Do you feel as if the world is spinning around you, but you are stuck in place, not knowing how you are standing up straight and surviving? You are not alone. The following article will review how loss and grief present an opportunity for growth and change.

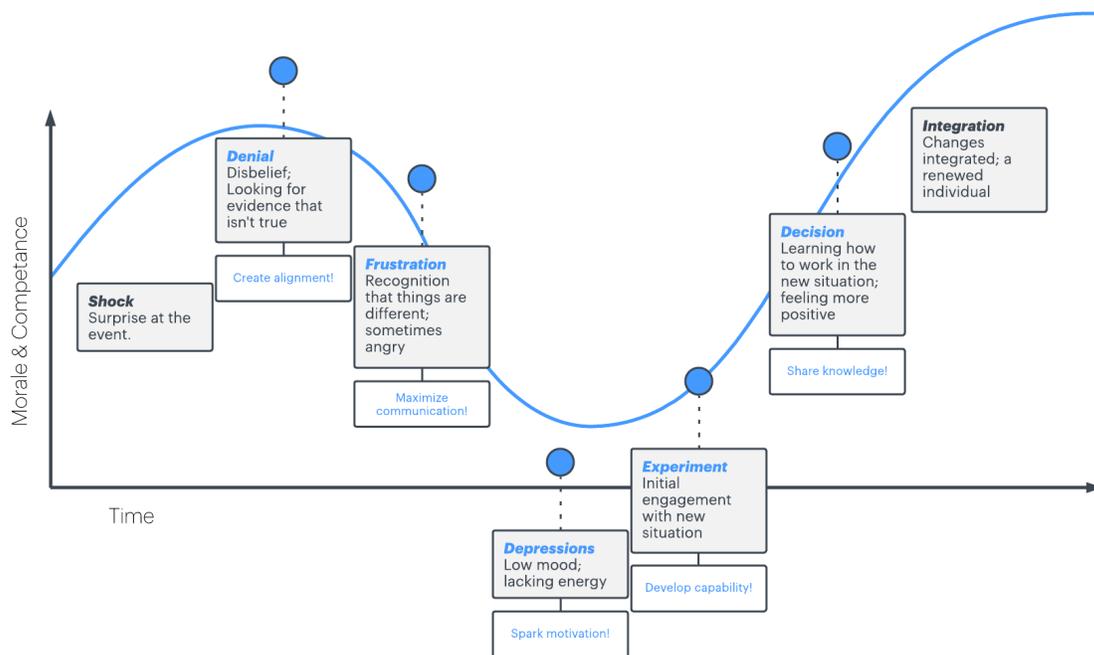
As you see above, the Chinese symbol for crisis consists of two symbols, the first means danger, and the second crossroads. It is a common misunderstanding that the second word means opportunity, which is not the case. One interpretation of the symbols for crisis is that danger presents itself and then we have a choice to make. We often wonder why we face the same situation in our life and get the same result, when we want something different. It is like following the ruts in the road and not taking a new path. Albert Einstein, the physicist, once defined insanity as: "Doing the same thing again and again and expecting different results."

So, how do we pivot and change in this difficult world when sometimes all we want is to feel safe and comfortable? It is difficult to feel safe when we are faced with dangerous and urgent situations that are not under our control: illness, financial worries, significant business challenges, possible job changes or loss, change in routine, not knowing what the future holds, feeling isolated and lonely, racism, unfairness, and lack of social justice in the world.

From Grief to Grateful

In a rapidly changing world, we can sometimes feel anxious, depressed, unmotivated, frozen and lost. If we look at the Kubler-Ross Change cycle, we see that many of the stages overlap with the stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance).

Kubler-Ross Model



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First, we are dealing with information and communication. We are shocked and in denial about what is happening. We question it, we look for different information, we freeze and don't know what to do. Resilience, which is the ability to handle and recover from difficult experiences and setbacks, to adapt, move forward and sometimes experience personal growth. Resilient people tend to be both optimistic and realistic, they have faith in the future, and yet face problems and issues head on with a practical point of view.

Next, we experience frustration and anger, helplessness, and feeling lost. This is a good time to seek emotional support from friends, family and colleagues. Sometimes depression sinks in and we ask, "what will I do?" "How will I survive?" We might feel overwhelmed, angry, and frustrated.

Once we feel loss, sometimes it is called, "sitting in the fire," where we move into and feel grief, rather than go around it. Kubler-Ross believes that we need to experience every prior step before we can move on to the next one. We begin to experiment, think outside the box, and feel the beginnings of hope. We feel empowered to make decisions and take action. Taking action gives us energy and motivation to move forward. We start to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Taking Action

It is sometimes difficult to see how to get from one stage to another. Regarding beginning to take action, here are some suggestions on how to pivot:

- Take one day at a time
- Be both realistic and optimistic; what is urgent, what do you need to address NOW, no matter how difficult
- Make hard decisions, don't second guess yourself and move forward
- Know your leadership strengths and think about how they can be used to pivot
- Ask for help
- Communicate honestly and often
- Don't overcommit
- Be authentic
- Be kind and gentle to yourself and others. Be forgiving.
- Take a slower pace, if possible
- Work with a coach to help you to reframe the situation and think outside the box
- Stay connected to others
- Enjoy rituals with friends family that provide meaning, e.g. cooking brunch every Sunday
- Be open and honest about learning about others that are not like you or have had different experiences. Read to expand your knowledge.
- Try to laugh and have fun. How about a virtual pet show?
- Think creatively. Take risks.
- Take physical care of yourself; sleep, eat healthy, do one thing you enjoy everyday.
- Put things in perspective. Do I have control? Will I care about this a year from now?
- Be grateful. Express love and kindness to others.