

# Psychophonetics

## CRISIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW BEGINNING

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No-one likes crisis. It is painful, it is damaging, it creates loss, it creates loneliness, it destroys life as we know it before we know what the next step is, it ends dreams, it shatters self-image, it is the very opposite of safety, safety-zone, security, comfort. We devote a lot of our time and energy to prevent the possibility of

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack  
There is a crack in everything.  
That's how the life gets in*  
Leonard Cohen, Anthem

crisis and maximise comfort and security, the whole of western-oriented economy and social structure is devoted to it.

Yet crisis is the major opportunity for necessary change and development. We are born in crisis, we die in crisis, and in between the transition between many of our life-changing phases involved crisis. The embryo loses its natural environment when the baby is born. No oxygen arrives any more through the navel cord. The baby chokes, he experiences the danger of death. He does not know there is another way to breath. No one told him. He just can't breathe. He becomes blue for lack of oxygen. Then he cries, breathes, and becomes a living baby.

Founder of Gestalt Therapy, Fritz Perles called this crisis: "The Blue Baby". Every human crisis has an element of 'The Blue baby': the old way of surviving cannot work anymore. You think you will die. You as you are cannot make it. You as you are *has* to die. But there is another way to live. You do not know about it yet. You have to activate this potential other way to survive, and in order to do so, you have to change, you have to become another human being, the one you have never been before, the one that is the next stage of your development. Once you go through this change – you will not wish to be back where you were. The baby does not wish to become an embryo again. There is a world out there to discover and to act in. But the crisis has to come first. Seen from this point of view – crisis is a process of birthing of one's higher potential through the material of one's old way of being. Potentially. Only potentially so.

Because crisis can also destroy potential, life, opportunity, love, family, parenthood, livelihood, your home, your community, your country, your life itself. We in relative peace, security and prosperity in Europe and the

West have the luxury of being able to work on social, political, economic and personal development, on transforming crisis into opportunity for human development. Because we can do so – we should do it for ourselves and for advancing humanity. But I wish to remember, in speaking about crisis as an opportunity – the ongoing crisis in many regions of the world in which war and conflicts are disasters, from which new opportunities may only arise much later.

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

### **Separation**

I often work with couples in crisis. Something of the old love story has come to an end—they cannot renew the original love, intimacy, communication, good will, motivation to stay together, relationship energy, trust. When the decision was made by at least one of them to separate—the striving is to separate humanly, minimising the cost to children and economy, creating a new separated-based relationship and parenting contract. Very often, if the separation is successfully done – human communication between the partners can improve remarkably, a development that became impossible while they were together. New life has been created for both of them, separately. Each one of them had to change in order to re-start their life.

But when the wish of the couple is to recover from the crisis, to stay together and to renew and re-build 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 version 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 take place, leading to the renewal of the relationship.

### **Individual**

For that to happen each of them have to take personal responsibility to their own inner life. For conflicts are created together, but overcoming them depends on individual change. Automatic defensive reactions have to be acknowledged, owned and transformed; habitual unconscious projections they trigger in each other have to be acknowledged, owned, and transformed; an upgrade of communication must take place in both of them leading to hear what the other says. Not what you fear that the other say, not what you hope that they say, not what you assume that they say, but what they actually say and mean from their own point of view; expectations, manipulations and disappointments – must be replaced by clear, honest requests and freely chosen offerings, as a basis for a new contract of relationship, which they might not have ever had before; forgiveness must be chosen and activated full heartedly, to be able to give themselves a new chance, to move on, to heal and to create new life; and gratitude and appreciation of each other has to be generated in order to allow love to be restored. By the middle of such a process, long before it has been completed (which is a life task) – both of them have changed. They have become, individually, the next version of themselves, the upgraded self, what

we call in Psychophonetics in Slavonia: “Nova Ja”, the new ‘I’. The crisis has indeed become an opportunity. That is an ideal process and an achievement. It is possible. It requires skills and good will. It is a real step in human conscious evolution.

But most often such a team work in relationship in crisis is not possible or not chosen. Then the individual is left alone to deal with the crisis. That is also possible, but it takes a special courage: the courage to go through emotional pain, embrace it, touch it, heal it, becomes one’s own healer. That is the opportunity hidden in a crisis. That is what happened to me in the crisis of the separation of my first marriage, many years ago. The separation was not my choice, it was imposed on me. We had two little children. Everything I had and was identified with was destroyed. I had nothing left to build on. It was a death process. It lasted for a few years. I had to let go of everything that was mine, to leave my community, the country of my birth, my family, my home, my children, my work, my life task as I knew it at that time, and, in order to give myself an opportunity to create a new life and a new destiny. I had to go away, to take hold of whatever was left of my wounded self and use it as a foundation for building a new life in a new country. I did that at a huge cost to my fatherhood and to my children.

I looked for a ‘destiny hospital’ for emergency healing. There was not any such hospital. I had to create it for myself with my own ten fingers. 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 it. I developed self-empathy. I became my own healer. That became the foundation of my life task: what I managed to do for myself, I managed to transform into a method of healing others, and later a method of healing I could start to teach: Psychophonetics. Primarily I managed to transform elements of drama into processes of self-awareness and self-transformation. I created a new method of healing, a new profession, a new curriculum for teaching this profession, a new social/cultural contribution. That would have never happened if not for my life crisis and my striving to heal from it. The crisis, in my life story became an opportunity. But the cost of it was immense, the sacrifice in personal life, parenthood, family, security and comfort was huge. The cost to others, mainly to my children effect the rest of our lives and relationships. It seems to me that new creation requires sacrifice. Something has to die for something else to be born.

A mother in her mid-30s came to me asking for help, her life is in ruins. Her husband left her with no process about it, communicating to her only through lawyers, making demands on shared custody and finance support to be imposed through a court. She is devastated, in huge pain, in deep grief for the destruction of her family, dream of home and future, frightened, powerless and hardly coping with the basic tasks of life. She has no idea how to face the hostile process that is coming, no ground to stand on, no power to speak for herself. She wanted to be strong and true to herself in that court case that was coming, and to find an inner foundation to stand on for this new life that was imposed on her in the middle of the destruction of her family. 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 soul, as it is. And when your soul reality is in severe pain – you have to own it, feel it, acknowledge it,

and start to heal it. There will be no other ground to stand on. She did feel everything. I encouraged her to imaging, standing in a distance, the woman that she wants to be in one week 's time in that court case, one week away from that session. She could see herself: strong, upright, grounded, dependent on no one's approval, taking full responsibility for her life, for her motherhood, standing and speaking for her rights, her heart strong and open. The picture was clear and real. I asked her to go to that place and become that woman. It took her a long time to fully become, in physical bodily gesture, that future woman. Her whole poster changed, she became practically taller, stronger, clearer, upright and relaxed. She practiced, in that position, looking everyone involved in the eyes, speaking her truth, angry with no one. From that position I asked her to look back at herself in the chair, where she was before, in the middle of agonising pain. She came closer. She could see that this woman was in devastating fear. She was a very young version of herself, a little child. She took care of that child. She reassured her that she does not have to be exposed to the hostility that is coming. She became her own self-parent. She became 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. Ji means a crucial moment of change. It does not mean opportunity, as some people assumes, but a drastic change. That much is inevitable. The crisis does not become an opportunity automatically. Many personal crises do not become an opportunity for change. People can get stuck in the trauma of the crisis and not heal and not move from it for many years. But the crisis can become an opportunity through conscious initiative, requiring a complete experience of the wound, the loss, the grief, the cost of it all, and 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.

Sometimes we have to have a crack in the old self in order to let the light of the potential new self to enter. In Psychophonetics, we call it conscious evolution.