

CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Resilience: An Inward Journey During Stressful Times by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.



Suddenly, our world has shifted; life has changed. Our society has had to adapt to the new reality of dealing with an unprecedented global health crisis. The ecological crisis, like the response to the coronavirus, demands a coordinated global response, and will force us, willingly or otherwise, to radically restructure our way of being in the world. That means big changes for everyone!



A valuable lesson for clinicians is that change can come about outside the therapeutic setting as well as within it. It can come about in emotional environments that offer a healthy space to learn to sit with the anxiety and pain rather than acting it out or withdrawing from it. Given our current climate of change and uncertainty, it is not unlikely to present with anxiety and/or depression. Anxiety and fear are a natural response to a threat. Our brains are wired to fear uncertainty, but we don't have to let fear or anxiousness rule our lives. Have you been wondering if there's a deeper message behind the tragic health crisis we're ALL dealing with? These times of turmoil can be used as an opportunity for personal transformation...We can develop resilience,

pause and decide what is the *need* in maintaining anxiety or fear of a particular situation, and then release the need, thereby gaining relief from the throbbing ache of *stuckness*. Each one of us has the power to ask, "What's causing

the symptom?” “What is my *need* that keeps me hanging onto destructive feelings or situations in my life?” As one up-grades one’s self-image and sense of identity, one begins to make healthier choices.

Not long ago, I was given a beautiful, exotic orchid plant. I consider myself an avid gardener, but I didn’t know how to care for this lovely orchid. After a few weeks of producing colorful blooms, it died — or so I thought. I was reluctant to toss the plant into the trash bin, so it sat dormant on my counter for several months. Then one day, astonishingly, my orchid appeared reborn. First, new buds peeked out, then new flowers began blossoming on its long, green stem. My mind-set had said, “*It looks dead therefore it must be dead.*” It wasn’t! It was engaging in a critical internal process that was invisible to the naked eye.

As a psychotherapist, I couldn’t help but see a similarity between orchids and people. Both have a blooming cycle, as well as quiet periods of indwelling. In the case of the orchid, it was quietly initiating the growth of new leaves and storing up energy for the new blooming cycle. Orchids, like people, need water, sunlight, warmth, and nourishment. And, like people, they are sensitive to the environment, to how they are cared for, and to change. When they are in their dormant, hibernating, or perhaps even thoughtful internal state, it doesn’t mean they are dead. It indicates that one need is not being met. When met, the orchid will bloom once again.

Life change, in people as well as in plants, occurs according to their own timing. I learned a new perspective about life change from my orchid: Growth and change often means that first something within needs to die.

In the case of my orchid, I learned that if the old spike does not generate a new spike and bloom, in all likelihood it will turn brown and die. In that case, take a sharp knife and cut off the old spike and the dead parts so new ones can grow. What will encourage us to hold a mirror up to our restricting beliefs and expectations so they prepare us, practically and psychologically, for what we must do to face the ecological crisis now, and in the years to come?

People, unlike orchids, hang on to the deadened, dysfunctional aspects of their lives. What “blooms” instead is a spiral of negative inner talk, depression, anger, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Growth is painful. But the gift in it is that if we keep pushing through it, we, too, may be reborn and bloom! Often, it takes a crisis to trigger such change and to compel us to embrace the new. What a task! Many blessings as we enter this new chapter of the year! Maybe it is a time of your own renewal!

Thank you for your support!

Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

www.drgelt.com