

Rise
Above
THE
CHAOS

How to Keep Positive in
an Unsettled World

CAROLYN GROSS



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This book is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a licensed healthcare practitioner, such as your physician or therapist. Before you begin any health improvement or healthcare regimen that involves changes to your lifestyle in any way, you should consult your physician or another licensed healthcare practitioner to ensure that you are in good health.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgementsix
Introductionxi
Chapter 1: <i>Chaos: The Great Teacher</i>	1
Chapter 2: <i>Categories of Chaos</i>	11
Chapter 3: <i>Symptoms of Stress</i>	19
Chapter 4: <i>Defining Moments</i>	27
Chapter 5: <i>Keys to Calm</i>	41
Chapter 6: <i>Life Transitions Reset Our Priorities</i>	53
Chapter 7: <i>Why Do We Fight Eating Right?</i>	61
Chapter 8: <i>Don't Rationalize—Exercise!</i>	73
Chapter 9: <i>Alternative Healing Solutions</i>	85
Chapter 10: <i>Spiritual Healing Solutions and Prayer Power</i>	97
Chapter 11: <i>Restore, Relax, Renew</i>	111
Chapter 12: <i>Trusting the Process in Your Life and Relationships</i>	125
Let's Stay Connected	139
About the Author	143
Health Resources	145
References	153

Chapter 2

Categories of Chaos

Your adversity is your advantage. It builds muscles, not wounds.

~Darren Hardy

Chaos comes in many forms, and the first step in rising above chaos is learning to identify and recognize its many faces. That's what this chapter is all about. It's precisely in moments of personal or professional upheaval where we need to define and confront the nature of the evil beast. When our abstract analytical mind grabs hold of a fearful situation, we can be overwhelmed by problems in all areas. Real or imagined, these thoughts activate all our stress hormones. If these fear storms take over, we are completely out of the moment.

Think back on a situation where you were waiting for a loved one to arrive, and when he or she failed to show up, you began thinking the worst. Suddenly, your whole being became upset, restless, and fitful, and the tension lasted until your fears were proved unfounded. Sound familiar? That's the insidious nature of internal chaos. One thought leads to another until we're overwhelmed and convinced the worst has happened, even if we have no actual data to prove it.

I like to give people a point of reference if they have lots of obsessive thoughts swirling, to help ground them to reality. Below is a list of cate-

gories of chaos you can use like a barometer. If you're feeling stressed and your internal chaos temperature is running high, or you feel a "storm" pending, you can reference why, and course correct. When I'm overreacting to some situation, I will run through this checklist to assess where I need to make some adjustments to regain my composure. The better I know myself, the better I show myself.

1) Too Many Commitments Causes Confusion

We are go-getters here in America, which is great until we lose our brilliant decision-making capacity or practical perspective. One of my former bosses was a motivated and ambitious executive who always had ten or more projects going simultaneously. If he was functioning well, no problem; his sales team could follow his directives. However, as soon as he got overwhelmed with worry or jittery from all his responsibilities, his staff would derail as well. But if he was out of sorts, he'd project his frustrations and micromanage his seasoned professionals (see Category Two: Resentments for how that worked out. Hint: not well!).

One day I advised him, "You're like the spoke in a wheel, and everything revolves around you. So, when you lose focus and get anxious about projects, we do too." Overachievers need to be warned not to *be* the category of chaos to their staff or families—especially for people who thrive on productivity.

2) Resentments: Prisons Without Walls

We can all ruminate on the hurts and slights we receive in life. Our brains can get stuck looking in the rearview mirror, focused on past resentments instead of plans and positivity. When we're obsessed with recent stings and perceived injustices, we can get mired in the muck instead of rising above it. Simply stated, hate hurts the hater. Those who have caused and created the injustice aren't suffering when you send

them negative thoughts; resentments bounce back every time, contaminating your mental airspace.

One of my favorite examples of all time happened when I spoke at a women's conference in Antelope Valley, California. A nun named Sister Antonia came to pray for the speakers at a special dinner the night before the event. This isn't commonplace in a non-sectarian event, but it happened.

As this sixty-something nun calmly and methodically made her way to the podium, I felt drawn to her. I noticed her shoulders slightly hunched forward like she had been praying most of her life. Before she launched into her prayer, she shared something about herself.

She spoke about her ministry to serve inmates and that this role led her to live with the inmates at the prison herself. Well, that got everyone's attention. She then told us that her mission was to help those inmates with life sentences to heal themselves of their resentments.

Let's face it: they probably had deeper resentments than you and me, right? Her next statement was nearly as shocking. Sister Antonia told us that she is always surprised when she does public work outside the prison and finds people in the free world who are unhappier than her incarcerated clients.

She said, "So many people that are free, living their lives without bars, are confined by their resentments and are living in prisons without walls."

I had never heard of a better definition of resentments in my life! And I'd been seeking something memorable for years. Resentments are like me putting myself behind bars. So, let me ask you: Do you want to live confined by your resentments? If not, it's in your power to find a key and let yourself out of your self-imposed cell. To forgive is divine, but it doesn't mean you will ever forget.

3) Illness Reveals Inexperience

The most unsuspecting people can be walking around thinking life is easy-breezy and then, suddenly, a diagnosis changes everything. In my