

Sowing Seeds and Stepping Forward During Challenging Times

By David Emerald

These are challenging times in which we live. Wherever you are in the world while reading this, I am certain that either you or someone close to you is facing economic, professional, social, physical, emotional or spiritual challenges of some sort. Challenge is part of the human experience. That said, these *do* seem to be especially difficult times for many of us.

It is easy to feel victimized by such challenges. Many of the forces we face appear not to be of our individual making. As a result, we can feel powerless to directly impact the suffering we experience and/or witness. Hopelessness festers.

One natural reaction is to long for a “magical someone or something” to come to the rescue – be that a political leader, executive management, a friend or a loved one. Or we may go into “overdrive” in an attempt to control the conditions we encounter. Another may be to “numb out” through substances and/or activities that relieve the pain of our predicament.

All of these are ways of reacting that are rooted in – and reinforce – the Victim Orientation and the Dreaded Drama Triangle.

*The vicious cycle created by the Victim Orientation and the Dreaded Drama Triangle pulls people into the darkest depths of the human experience and breeds hopelessness. They long for a magical someone or something to race to their rescue. But no matter how much tough luck the human experience dishes out, the Creator Orientation and The Empowerment Dynamic provide a larger perspective...Your life is a kind of learning laboratory where you're constantly experimenting with your capacity to design your life and to choose your response to what happens to you.” From Chapter 9: “Shift Happens” *The Power of TED** (*The Empowerment Dynamic)*

So, how does a creator respond to challenging times? First and foremost, a creator sees the situation for what it is – a Deconstructive Challenger. In *The Power of TED**, the character Ted describes such challengers as those that

often come “unwanted and unwelcome” and, yet, bring with them the opportunity for learning. In order to uncover the lesson, we must dissect or take apart, hence “deconstruct,” the situation.

These challenging times offer us the opportunity to learn, grow and make preparations. During this “winter of our discontent” we are offered the opportunity to put into practice some of the following wisdom passed down through the ages in agrarian cultures:

Slow down – In challenging times, the tendency is to react by quickening our pace, trying to control our circumstances. But we cannot hold off the next season. Creators see challenging times as an opportunity to step back, reflect on the lessons learned from seasons past, make due with that which has been harvested and refurbish or make repairs to that which has become worn. They then let go of the past, while retaining any lessons learned, and turn to face the future and the seasons to come.

Prepare the Soil – There is a time for planning and looking ahead. Like farmers envisioning their fields and the seasonal plantings, creators clarify their envisioned outcomes and do not let the current circumstances limit the possibilities of the future. The reality may be that creating those outcomes may take longer to manifest or may take different paths than originally envisioned, but this is not a time for compromising vision. Just as farmers rotate crops and experiment with new plantings, our vision may take new and different forms and shapes.

Sow Seeds – Creators sow seeds by sharing their vision with others and supporting those around them in envisioning their own outcomes. Network with others who are successful in your field of work, and speak with others who share similar interests. Discover what others have experienced and learned. Share your experience with others. This is how we become co-creators.

See Current Reality Clearly – Farmers cannot control the weather. As the time for action approaches, they pay careful attention to current conditions and take action when the opportunity presents itself. As creators, we must “see reality for what it is” and to balance our assessment and discernment between helpful and limiting factors.

Take Baby Steps – Take action. All of the previous four practices involve taking baby steps. The farmers usually do not plant all their crops at once. They plant different crops at different times when the current reality is optimal for taking that step. As creators, we take baby steps by investing our time, talents and resources in those choices and actions which move in the direction of the outcomes we envision sowing, nurturing and – in time – reaping.

The above steps have been guiding my own process the past few months. I have been taking time to reflect on what has worked and what hasn't. Sharing, applying and reinforcing The Empowerment Dynamic (TED*) continues to be my guiding passion and vision. Yet, in discerning the impact of current economic realities on travel and other expenses, offering an alternative to face-to-face seminars emerged as a new "field to plow." Others have shared with us their experience with technology-based learning, and so we began to research technology providers. Given the current realities of schedules and financial resources, we have committed to taking the baby step of offering our webinars, as well as posting resources on our website. I share this here not to promote the classes themselves, but as a "near and dear" example from my own experience.

These *are* challenging times. And yet it is in seasons such as these that we are called, as creators, to strengthen our capacity to choose the steps are ours to take, however limited the range of choices may be in this moment.

Many have faced challenges greater than or, at the least, different from our own. Some of them have left words of challenge and inspiration.

"These are times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life... that great characters are formed. Great necessities call forth great leaders." Abigail Adams (1744-1818) in a letter to Thomas Jefferson

"The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome. The hilltop hour would not be half so wonderful if there were no dark valleys to traverse." Helen Keller; blind and deaf educator (1880-1968)

The next season *will* come – eventually. Let us, as creators, treat this as a time in which to pause, take stock, and prepare for moving in the direction of the days of growth and harvest that lie ahead.