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5 Tips to Carpe the Chaos and Thrive



Gloria Feldt's [No Excuses: 9 Ways Women Can Change How We Think About Power](#) has stood near the top of Amazon's leadership booklist since it was published last October. A teen mom who became CEO of the world's largest reproductive health provider and advocacy organization, Gloria learned leadership on the job. Now she's a sought-after speaker, author, and consultant. Here are her tips on how to turn chaos into opportunity:

- 1. Think positive.** Be like Monty Python: Always look at the bright side of life. You might as well. Chaos is inevitable because change is inevitable. And whoever is most comfortable with the ambiguity change creates is most likely to thrive, not just survive.
- 2. Seize your moment:** Paradigm shifts don't happen in moments of stability. Wars, depressions, diseases like HIV/AIDS, social justice movements—these all cause social turbulence. "Normal" patterns are interrupted by technological innovations—television, the pill, cell phones, Twitter. When there's a mess to clean up, they always bring in the women, right? If a woman can offer a solution and it works, they no longer care whether you have a higher-pitched voice and don't follow football scores. Seize the advantage when boundaries are hazy because the world is open to new solutions.
- 3. Take the lead.** A leader is anyone who gets something done. When I was leaving my first CEO position, a board member asked me what I thought the chief qualification for the job was. I blurted out "raw courage." Courage to act even in the midst of chaos is the core of leadership: to own responsibility when you don't have total authority, to make decisions when you know none of the options is perfect, to lead even when you're quaking in your boots.
- 4. See through other eyes.** Learn from others even if their views might differ from yours. Sarah Palin seized chaos during McCain's 2008 faltering presidential race. She took the opportunity offered to join the ticket. After the election, Palin sensed that the aggrieved base of the party was eager for her brand of rhetoric, and seized it.
- 5. See the potential.** Since innovation usually comes from people not regarded as the norm—like a dorky teenaged Bill Gates creating Microsoft in his garage—we often don't see it coming. Our instinct is to seek stability. That squanders the incredible potential of disruptive change to create new channels of opportunity, more inclusive vocabularies, and better technologies. Chaos means boundaries are fluid so you can accomplish things you might not have been able to do otherwise. Carpe [Latin for "to pick or pluck"] the chaos.

To learn more, check out the author's website: GloriaFeldt.com.