

## Calm in Chaos

By Maureen Ross, MA



**What is your chaos like on a scale of 1 to 10, right now? Are you saying, "This sounds good, but I don't have time to read it." Please, stop. You need this. How do you react to chaos on a daily basis? How does it affect your relationships, including the one with your dog(s)?**

We all have days when our stress levels are worse than others. Some stress is healthy, and jars us into motion, urging us to prioritize, plan and get moving. Too much stress causes blips in our radar and ill health.

Here is a typical day described to me by more than one client: 3-phones are ringing – I have 3 project deadlines -- I work from home so I can be around when the kids arrive – I have to pick up the dog at the vets and stop at the grocery store, making it quick because I want to get the dog home to rest, and get supper going. Oh yeah – the laundry is still in the dryer, and I left the click-to-pay online – I just know my information is now in some foreign country. I need help, but everyone else is busy too. AHHHHH

Sound familiar? Sure it does, because we all have similar days, perhaps with different stories or dilemmas. Take solace that you are not alone and there is a reprieve, but it has to come from the source, and that source is you. Take back your breath and relax.

We all experience chaos. So do our dogs. They take their cues from us, so when we become unglued, they join us, hide, or watch with amusement. Some people thrive on chaos and create more because it feels normal to them. Others end up on medication because life is controlling them. Whatever this means for you, and whatever help you need, it is okay. In the moment of chaos, and this takes practice, it is possible to experience calm by simply saying, "stop" and "breathing". This does not mean that life will be cherries and whip cream, projects won't poof themselves into completion, but you will be better able to navigate the day knowing that "you", yes "you" are in control of how chaos affects you.

Honor yourself and your way of engaging life on a daily basis. I enjoy multi-tasking, but if it starts affecting me or my dog's well-being (I'm screaming at them), then I know it is time to breathe calm into chaos. The stuff still needs to get done -- but I have choices. I can take a moment like Tia (above) to roll in the grass, take a walk and choose what absolutely needs to be accomplished right now, and in what way. It does not have to be "perfecto", and it doesn't have to all be done "now". However, letting things pile up isn't the answer either. That creates more chaos.

How we deal with daily chaos is a matter of breath. If you aren't focusing on your breath at least a few times a day, then you aren't getting enough oxygen to get the tasks accomplished anyway.

*Stop: Take a deep belly breath now – breathing in to your abdomen to the count of 4 – 8 counts slowly – not speed dial 1,2,3,4--8. Hold that breath for 4 to 8 seconds. Exhale slowly for 4 – 8 counts. Even if you use 8-counts, that is only 24 seconds of your time to pick your twitching head up off the floor. Read on ---*

Chaos swirls around us, like being in the eye of a storm. We can be safe in chaos, by becoming observers. Taking a moment, saying STOP -- out loud -- helps. Taking a deep breath changes every

cell in your being, and your body's response to chaos. It calms the endorphins and cortisol (which causes belly fat) and regulates serotonin and dopamine (fight / flight response).

Shut off the music, turn off the news (CNN) and walk away from the computer. I'm going to do that right now. Ahh – better. Deep belly breathes are the correct way to breathe. Shallow, chest breathing is akin to panic attacks, where our body is in flight or fight mode. Being in chaos is like fight or flight mode. Ever notice how you get injured more often when you are doing too much, too quickly or not paying attention? I've cut myself more times (I love to pretend I'm a master chef) when I'm rushing to cook. When I'm playing Rachel Ray, I have to do it when it can be fun, not chaotic. It is way too dangerous and blood doesn't add great taste to the meal, maybe a little coloring.

*Be mindful that chaos creates chaos. Calm creates calm.  
A blend of both in balance makes life sweeter for us and our dogs.*

Keeping it in perspective, our chaos in the moment is usually much smaller than living in a shanty tent in Haiti while excrement from the tent next door is rolling into ours, wondering where our next meal is coming from! Have you ever considered what life would be like if tomorrow you didn't have arms or legs? Not to be morose, but when things are at their worse, looking around puts it into perspective. Usually, we are much better off than we think or feel, but the chaos, colored with a dose of self-pity makes it seem much worse.

Next time you swirl into chaos, ask yourself what really has to be done NOW? All of it? Really, is that true-- [Byron Katie, The Work](#). Most of the time, there are ways we can organize our lives, delegate, outsource or do it a little less than perfect. Ask for help -- it only hurts for a minute. Outsource (hire or ask someone to temporarily help). No, it won't get done the exact same way, but you can delegate walking the dogs to someone.

OPIUM helps -- organizing, planning, implementing (action), understanding flexibility, and making changes if necessary. Life is not fair, it is challenging, change will happen. [Tony Robbins](#) has a saying: "life jars us into motion." Most of the time we become use to a comfort zone. That's fine, if we are joyful and do not become complacent. If we are frequently complaining and tired, it might because we need a change, even a small, planned one. Big changes will shock us into movement, whether we like it or not. We find new beginnings in change.

Have you ever watched how many things a dog can do in a few minutes? They can eat, go out pee, poop, sniff with delight, roll in pleasure, de-stuff a toy, empty the trash cans, wag their tail, run in circles, trip us, then lie down, yawn, fart and go to sleep. We can accomplish a lot in a short period too, as long as we take frequent calm breaks. Positive energy outlets are a must for everyone (exercise – sports). With guidance dogs have the right idea. They do what they need to do with the little time we give them to do it – then relax. We can learn from them.

Remember I shared that some thrive on chaos, thinking that without it our lives are meaningless. That puddle of nothingness you feel when you sit still and breathe is exactly what you need. It is called peace, even for a few moments. This peace gives you a chance to truly listen to your body, thoughts, needs and concerns. It gives you a moment to put life into perspective – chaos into calm.

Manage your chaos like you do your health and well-being because they are interconnected. Sit with your dog and breathe for a few seconds. You may discover an abundance of energy from this little siesta that teaches STOP to what you don't want your dogs to do, and STOP for what you need – breathe calm into chaos. Enjoy the Journey, Maureen