



## How to Thrive in Chaos

We're facing scary, chaotic times. Building resilience—the ability to bounce back from setbacks—is key to your success. And the best kept secret Gloria wants to share with you today is how to reframe that chaos into energy to help you move forward and create new solutions you might never have imagined. In this timely episode, she talks about seizing opportunities where you least expect them and finding your power amid uncertainty.

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**Gloria Feldt:** Hello, and welcome to Power to You. I'm Gloria Feldt. I've spent my entire career advancing women's rights and equality from the boardroom to the bedroom. I co-founded Take the Lead because I figured out how to crack the code that has been holding women back from equal leadership and pay, and now I want to give you all those secrets and tools to prepare and propel you with training and coaching to harness your incredible power to in your professional lives.

Like I always say, carpe the chaos. A colleague once gave me a poster bearing the caption, "When you're up to your ass in alligators, it's hard to remember your goal was to drain the swamp." That's always good for a chuckle of recognition, because, I mean really, is there any one of us who hasn't been there? In a time of chaos, whether it's economic, or social, or within your organization, when many people are desperately trying to keep those writhing reptiles from nipping their knees, it's hard to keep your eyes on the prize, your focus on the vision, your hands steady at the wheel. But a counterintuitive skill that can help anyone thrive in times of change and disruption is to embrace the chaos as opportunity. Carpe the chaos.

Carpe the chaos is my power tool number five of the nine I created, and that I teach about, and that I talk about in greater depth in my book, *No Excuses: Nine Ways Women Can Change How We Think About Power*. These power tools are designed to help women succeed in life and at work. When you've been in a chaotic situation, in work or in your personal life, what did you do? Did you retreat or did you step forward and own it? Did you rewrite the rules and set new parameters? What did you learn that might help others in that process?

I'm going to tell you there are no magic answers to keeping true to your goal when the alligators are nipping at your feet, but here are five tips to help you keep your head above water and the alligators at bay: First of all, think positive. You know, like that old Monty Python song? Always look at the bright side of life. Like that little boy who saw a pile of poop in the street and excitedly told his mom,

“Mom, there must be a pony here!” So, I’m gonna say that it’s all about how you think about it.

Resilience, building resilience, the ability to bounce back from setbacks is a key to success, and the ability to reframe the chaos into energy to help you bounce back is what will help you do it. And whoever is most comfortable and proactive with the ambiguity created by change is the most likely, not just to survive, but to thrive as a leader or as a human being, so the first tip is... sounds simple, but maybe it isn’t so simple. It’s always look at the bright side of life. Think positive.

The second tip is see your moment and seize it. You have to understand that paradigm shifts and big changes don’t happen in moments of stability. Wars, economic upheavals, diseases, like HIV/AIDS or the coronavirus, social justice movements, these all cause social turbulence, when normal patterns are disrupted by technological innovations, whether it’s the automobile, television, the pill, cell phones, the internet, Twitter, just say, “Bring it on!” Don’t duck or run away from it. Use its energy to fuel your next opportunity.

Suddenly, if a woman can offer a solution in a traditionally male field, and it works, nobody’s gonna care whether she has a higher-pitched voice and doesn’t follow football scores. I just recently read a Bloomberg interview with SAP Co-CEO Jennifer Morgan. When she was named president of SAP North America, she was promoted up two levels, and she said that, in traditional terms, meant, “Well, they would say I wasn’t ready.” All the time people thought, “Oh my gosh, the business is in turmoil. Is this the right decision?”

Well, as it turns out, that’s almost exactly the right time to make a counterintuitive move, and it certainly was right for Jennifer Morgan, because she’s since then had yet another promotion. Because, you know, why would you want to keep doing what brought you into the turmoil and chaos in the first place? Sheesh! Sometimes I shake my head at the way we look for safety, when taking a risk is actually the safer path. Morgan went on to become the first American woman named to SAP’s executive board, as president of the Americas and Asia in 2017, and more recently, she and Christian Klein were appointed co-CEOs when long-time top chief executive Bill McDermott stepped down.

But what if she hadn’t been willing to carpe the chaos? What if she hadn’t been willing to take that risk, when people were saying, “Oh, no. The organization is in turmoil. Maybe this is not the right time to bring a woman in because we’ve never had one before.” Seize the advantage when boundaries are hazy, because that is when the world is open to new solutions, like a female leader. This is women’s moment, and being authentically ourselves as leaders is the winning strategy, especially in chaos.

So, that brings me to the third tip I want to give you, and it’s very simple: Take the lead. You know, courage to act in the midst of chaos is the core of leadership. Actually, to own responsibility when you don’t have total authority to make decisions, and when you know none of the options is perfect, and to lead even

when you are quaking in your boots, it's kind of like that old Nike slogan. Just do it.

I used to think that people who did extraordinary things were somehow different, but what I learned along the way from my own leadership journey is that they're not different, they're just people who just do it. We've seen the results of female senators who worked across the aisle to broker federal budget deals when nobody else could seem to do it. We've seen examples of this everywhere. Take a look around. What are you seeing? Where have you seen people carpe the chaos? Where they've been able to take the lead, and actually make great progress for themselves, for their organizations, and for their own careers?

The fourth tip is to look through other eyes. I absolutely love Rosabeth Moss Kanter's metaphor of the kaleidoscope. I heard her speak the other day. She has a new book out called *Think Outside the Building*, and Rosabeth has been one of my personal leadership heroes for many, many years. I think she is just so brilliant. Highly recommend her work. So, she uses the metaphor of the kaleidoscope, where you shake up the pieces and then you see things differently, so think about chaos that way. How do people in completely different fields and point of views approach a situation?

I personally deliberately try to make opportunities for myself to be in rooms with people who aren't in the same field that I'm in, because I want to know how they think. I want to know how they solve problems. If I'm in a room full of people who are doing the same job that I'm doing, I might not hear as much creativity and innovation, especially when people are worried about the chaos that's happening in the field. I'm also a great fan of cards called *Creative Whacks*. It's *Creative Whacks*. It's just a deck of cards that is just full of interesting scenarios. I pull out a card, and it literally helps me think about a new solution for a problem that seemed intractable before that. And also, there's a lot of humor in those cards, so I would say do try to see the humor in every situation. Laughter is always useful leavening for new ideas.

Five. The last tip I want to give you is appreciate the potential. So, once you've seen with different eyes, that should help you with tip number five, to see and appreciate the potential. You know that innovation usually comes from people who are not regarded as the norm, like a teenage Bill Gates creating Microsoft, or what became Microsoft, in his garage. We often don't see it coming. Our instinct is to seek stability, and that squanders the incredible potential of disruptive change, to create new channels of opportunity, more inclusive vocabularies, and better technologies. Chaos signals that boundaries are fluid, and when boundaries are fluid, people will think differently. And when people are open to thinking differently, you can accomplish things you might not have been able to do otherwise.

So, shoo those alligators away and press forward. Carpe the chaos, and I promise you new ways to achieve previously unrealizable goals will almost inevitably

appear. Practice your power this week by trying out one or two or three of those tips. Remember, they are think positive, see your moment and seize it, take the lead, look through different eyes, and appreciate the potential. So, just pick out any one or two or three of those, and try to apply it. And be sure and let me know how it goes when you do by sharing your thoughts with me on social media, @gloriafeldt, or emailing me at [powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com](mailto:powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com). I can't wait to hear from you.

Till then, Power to You.

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