

Embracing The Unpredictable

by Stewart Blackburn

For those of us who like a little order in our lives, this may be a bit unsettling. But, when we get down into what is at the heart of power, it's the ability to make choices, including the ones no one would or could expect. That is, it is our capacity to evaluate all the possibilities that we can find. If we were predictable, then we wouldn't have to look at so many options. We would just go for the old tried-and-true ones or the ones closest to what we know.

Free-will, this ability to choose whatever we want to, is what drives personal power. If we decide to do something entirely contrary to what we've always done, then so be it. We are not constrained by the past or what others think we should do. We have the capacity of unpredictability and that allows us to explore new ways of doing things and new possibilities for old problems.

In 1927 the prominent physicist Werner Heisenberg articulated his principle that we could not accurately predict both the position and the velocity of any given atomic particle. That principle, now called Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, mirrors what we find in our lives. We don't and we can't know exactly what is happening or going to happen. Oh sure, we have some pretty good ideas. But these are based on probabilities, averages taken over many events. Any given event has a wide range of possibilities. What we do with these possibilities is called "Life."

Our reactions to uncertainty are determined primarily by how we view our existence. If we feel that we are pawns in the game of life, subject to the vagaries of chance and fate, then we might well react to the possibilities of random factors in our lives with great trepidation and fear. How could we ever handle all those things that might happen to us?

One the other hand if we feel that we are kings and queens in the game of life, then we have the confidence that we can handle whatever blows our way. We know that we are capable, competent beings who have the ability to not only not be emotionally shattered with the unexpected, but who also can deal with changes with skill and a level of proficiency.

This capability does not even take into account that we who have accepted that our personal world is a function of our thoughts and feelings know that we can alter our life experiences with our choices. We can decide how we want to shape our lives from the present moment forward. That is, we know that we have the power to alter our reality and influence the world around us.

So when anyone becomes afraid of the unpredictability of their world and focuses on what might happen, they are abandoning their power. The advantage to

doing this is that they do not have to take responsibility for their lives and can happily blame others for whatever it is they don't like. The disadvantage is, of course, that they aren't able to change things for the better.

The skills needed to embrace unpredictability are three-fold. The first is, of course, confidence. We need to be confident that we can handle whatever seems to be coming our way. We need to trust ourselves to the degree that we have the faith that we can handle the life that presents itself before us. This is a skill that comes more easily the more we give it our attention instead of focusing on our doubts and fears.

The second major skill that we need is an understanding of how to handle disappointment. There are major religions which teach that disappointment is inevitable when desires aren't fulfilled. This is utter nonsense. Disappointment is a *choice*. When confronted with things which are not of our choosing, we don't have to choose disappointment out of all of the ways we can react. While we may be in the habit of choosing disappointment when we don't get what we want, we can be much happier by choosing something else – anything else!

And when we are confident in our ability to influence the world, not control it but influence it, and we no longer allow disappointment to take over our emotions, we can see that the unpredictable has in fact offered us a great gift. We are now presented with new and perpetually changing patterns of choice. If we lift our heads up, we can see that the new situation has given us many new things to choose from.

Our job is not to make the best of a bad situation, or to bemoan the loss of some dream of ours. It is to look at the new scenario and see what options are now available to us. What new experiences can we now consider? What benefits can we find in the new circumstances? Where can we find pleasure in the new condition? Unpredictability can be a dear friend if we allow it to become one. As we go through our lives seeking to grow and explore our world, unpredictability gives us the seeds for new adventures and learning. I take my hat off, and everything else, to the exquisite marvel of unpredictability.