

## Apocalypse Now or Cabin Fever? Process in action

The psychological impact of radical shift in environment and circumstance of any sort, entails a process. When we lose a loved one, we go through stages of grief, that is denial, guilt, bargaining, anger, depression, reconstruction, acceptance and hope. When we immigrate into a new culture, we go through the honeymoon, then comes the culture shock, then recovery and eventually an adjustment, acculturation and integration. In a divorce, again, the stages of grief, euphoria, depression and rebirth. In short, any time we find ourselves in the midst of a significant change, even a welcome, positive change, we as human beings require a process that allows our feelings to catch up with the realities of our situation. This is because our brains have two processing hard drives, fast and slow. The feeling brain is our fast processing hard drive and is responsible for our primary basic emotions, whereas a thinking brain is the slow hard drive in charge of our rational processes and more complex emotions. In other words, we first have an immediate visceral reaction to an event such as fear, excitement, anger or disgust. Only after the initial feeling, are we able then rationally interpret the event. It is during this secondary process that we are able to develop a more complex understanding of our experience, creating an integrated rational, as well as an emotional self-story which contributes to our sense of identity and growth as individuals. If, however, we are not able to complete the necessary process, utilizing both primary and secondary functions, we become stuck in a negative feedback loop, unable to grow from our difficult experiences. We have all been a friend to an individual, unable to move on from their anger toward their ex, even after many years of divorce for example. Or a co-worker that can't let go of old grudges, or a bereaved family member that refuses to embrace life. It follows then, that when a society is collectively experiencing a radical change such as a global pandemic, or the great depression, or a war, or a revolution, these stages become apparent not only on an individual level, but also on a greater global scale, in the greater whole.

For the first time in many decades now, the western world is facing a radical change in its environment and circumstance. With the acceleration of information technology, our society's reaction to such change becomes more immediate and universal. The information we share with each other carries the primary emotion embedded in it, hence we are not only sharing information, we are also sharing emotion and in that sharing we are unanimously vibrating with identical limbic responses. A human brain has cells known as the mirror neurons; mirror neurons are there to be activated when resonating with another's emotional state. IN other words, if one is listening to a sad story, where the story teller appears to be sad, the listener's mirror neurons become activated, making him/her mimic the neural activity of the story teller. With high speed internet accessible to the majority of the world population, we are now able to export our emotional states universally with a speed of a neural synapse. There is something beautiful and terrifying about this at the same time. The question is are we collectively as well equipped to export secondary, integrative process as we are primary? how do we work through these radical changes as a collective? How do we move from fear and anger to reconstruction and integration? How do we as a global community grow, rather than become stuck in our stages of grief? Currently our YouTube and social media platforms are flooded with primary stages of processing these radical shifts. Conspiracy theories about vaccines to control the population and evil groups plotting the second coming are the examples of our limbic reaction to the global shut down. Feeling of being out of

control brings about fear, an underlying anxiety of apocalypse in the midst of the cabin fever. Fear naturally lends itself to anger and anger can lead to a cathartic outcry. Collapse of the old monuments, revolutions, cries for reforms, riots, streets on fire, are all a result of prolonged forced self-reflection, an inability to distract ourselves from parts of us that no longer work, like a grieving mother screaming in the solitude of her car, or a betrayed lover burning cherished love letters. The function of the primary process is to bring about a catharsis, a breaking point, but then, what then? Then must come reconstruction, repair, acceptance, hope and rebirth. How will we come out of our isolation and come together?