



LIFEQUAKE

What were your favorite toys as a child? Who was your best friend in grade school? What clique did you belong to in high school? Where did you go to college? Where did you meet your future spouse? Talk about your work life – did you have a job? a career? a calling? What was the high point of your life? The low point? The turning point.

You are the story that you tell yourself. How do you tell your story? Are you a victim, hero, warrior, caretaker, believer? What matters most to you? According to Bruce Feiler, author of *Life is in the Transitions*, how you adapt your story as you revise, rethink, and rewrite your personal narrative as things change or go wrong – matters even more. He postulates that “the proper response to a setback is a story.”

He asked 225 Americans representing all 50 states to tell their stories. As remarkably different as each narrative was, central themes and patterns emerged. Where once life was predictably linear, it no longer follows discernable stages. It has a shape. Where once we had setbacks, now we have regular disruptors and the occasionally whammy he calls a lifequake. Regardless of the disruptors, the lifequakes or the shape that these upheavals give each life, three perspectives emerge:

- 1 Agency** - the “me” story, characterized by autonomy, freedom, creativity, or mastery. “I can have an impact.” This perspective is shaped by a trajectory – a line with ups and downs.
- 2 Belonging** - the “we” story, characterized by relationships, community, friends, and family. “I have people who love me.” This perspective is shaped in a circle – a line that closes ranks.
- 3 Cause** - the “thee” story, characterized by a calling, mission, direction, or purpose. “I am committed to something beyond myself.” This perspective is shaped into an object like a star.

All three perspectives (Feiler calls them the ABC’s) are present in each of us, but we tend to favor one over the others, especially in times of change.

How will you tell the story of 2020? For the first time in our history, we are all going through the same lifequake. As involuntary as a pandemic is, how you react to it is voluntary. Are you a victim, hero, warrior, caretaker, believer? What matters most to you? Protecting yourself, your loved ones, the world? What are you revising, rethinking, or rewriting about your personal narrative?

For me, it has been a time of reflection. I am grateful for the life habits that I have been able to continue despite current distancing. I am proud of my sons' continued life trajectory in the face of one of the handful of lifequakes they can expect over the course of their lives. I am deeply in debt to a close group of friends who have sustained my need for belonging. And I remain committed to my calling of making worklife better.

After four months of safer-at-home, you may be asking "what's next"? This is an opportune time to review what living your best life is. There is an exercise you can do with the help of a handful of friends and colleagues. It is called The Reflected Best Self Exercise. Ask each of them to describe an incident when they saw you at your best. Collect the feedback (you may not remember the incident) and see if you can find themes or patterns. These tales from the trenches will not only lift you, but they will help you better describe your life's shape. My shape is a step stool. I like to give people a boost. Then, I like to get out of the way. My favorite reflections start with "you changed my life" and every time it has been a surprise.

**"
...you changed my life."
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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20+ years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

Have a Question? Email it to Dr. Pat: pfuller@bks-partners.com

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