

Leadership through Chaos by KD5BJ
Taken from “Leading Through Chaos”, by Ret. Lt. Col. Scott Mann

At last training I shared Ret. Lt. Col. Scott Mann’s advice to cope with anxiety. Today, quoting from his book “Leading through Chaos,” I would like to share what he advises us to do once disaster strikes.

All Right. Emergency has hit. Disaster has struck, and now what?

Retired Green Beret Lt Colonel Scott Mann suggests these four steps to climb out of chaos and reach a new order.

Step #1. – Accept that we are never going to tame the chaos.

We must accept that in our lives there are events that we cannot control. We need to follow the stream like we would a raging river on a raft. Remember control what you can, and accept what you cannot control.

Step #2 – Resign yourself to Ride the Wave of chaos.

In many FEMA and Homeland Security classes and exercises, instructors, who have been there and done that, constantly remind us that after a disaster, life will never get back to normal. It will go back only into a new normal.

We have to come to the sober conclusion that we need to let go of the life the way it was. That life will be gone with the wind. In this world, chaos and change and are a constant. At times it is very disruptive because it takes what we are accustomed to live and turns it over upside down.

Especially when we are not used to chaos, we are presented with adversities that are larger than we are and hard to grapple. We need to move through the new situation with a semblance of order. For those who take FEMA classes the Planning P comes to mind, where we form cycles in which we face each challenge, plan a solution, and tackle it as a team.

We also must decide what to let go of, knowing that it will hurt. But if you want our team, or our family, or our neighborhood, to move on through some kind of new order, it must start with each of us. And we must bring order into our life before we can bring it into the life of others around us.

I mentioned the Planning P. What is the Planning P, some of you may ask. The Planning P, or the Operational Period Planning Cycle, is, well, a P. Imagine a P. The straight line indicated what happens during the Initial Response. The event happens, notifications go out, the first ISC 201, or incident brief, is created, the Unified Command meets.

The circular side of the P, called also the circuit of death, because it happens over, and over and over again until the end of the incident, is a series of actions and/or meetings for the next

operational period, such as: IC or UC develops or updates the objectives; after that, the Command and General Staff meet.

After that meeting you have a period to prepare for and hold the tactics meeting. Once the tactics meeting is over, you prepare for and then hold the planning meeting.

After the Planning meeting, you prepare the Incident Action Plan (IAP), which (hopefully, if the job is done right) is approved.

At this point the Operations briefing is held and the crews are informed and go to work, executing the plan. This is the start of a new operational period and a new shift gathers, with the process starting all over again with the IC or UC updating the objectives etc.

Back to Ret. Lt. Col. Mann ...

Step # 3 – Instill more discipline and routine.

Retired Navy Seal Jacko Willink states that "Discipline equals Freedom." Discipline is all about order, and chaos has its rhythm. Ret. Lt. Col. Scott Mann solicits us to install rhythm in our lives to make our way toward order. In other words, if your personal life is in chaos, life around you is in chaos, too. He reiterates that if our life has no rhythm, we will be incapable to move forward out of the chaos.

Engaging in emergencies or events with the pros, you will hear of the "battle rhythm." It will hang on walls at the EOC, in the virtual EOC, and/or at the Command Post. It is a deliberate daily holistic timetable of command, staff and unit activities intended to synchronize current and future operations. The planning P can be a basis for the battle rhythm. It enables knowledge sharing, knowledge management and decision-making

Step # 4 – Avoid Headline Saturation

Mann also suggests that we be watchful of information overload. Being informed, reading reports, staying current with the news is all important, but take it in small doses. After we have watched and read the news or the reports, we need to make sure we engage in physical activity like a run, or hug a loved one, or play with our dog.

It is just like we would do when we are angry to take down our emotional temperature. Overload of information will drag us back into chaos, keeping us in a feeling of helplessness and lack of control over our life or situation at hand.

In conclusion, to quote Lt. Col. Mann, "because we cannot control chaos, we have to move through it. Once we have figure out what we can control and what we cannot, we can start looking at the complexity of the situation."

This is KD5BJ, back to net.