

Welcome to the twenty-sixth edition of Jennifer Selby Long's *Traveling Light*. Are you blessed with the talent and opportunity to lead? *Traveling Light* will skyrocket your impact and lighten the load in your life. It's based on the work of executive coach and management consultant Jennifer Selby Long. Copyright 2008 Jennifer Selby Long. All rights reserved.

Please add jennifer.selby@selbygroup.com to your white list or address book in your e-mail program, so that you have no trouble receiving future issues.

Do You Want to Calm Your Fears?

It's been a whopper of an economic ride lately. Your net worth is down. You're more worried about your job security than you were a month ago. You may even be afraid your bank will fold and you'll lose your money.

Several years ago, I facilitated a global off-site meeting for team of engineering leaders. After the session, one of the Chinese leaders shared with me the Chinese symbol for change, which is not an individual word, but a composition of two words: Wei and Gi. *Wei* means danger, and *Gi* means opportunity.

It strikes me how this fundamental truth has been known for thousands of years, and how easy it is to forget the opportunity when all we sense is the danger. Danger and opportunity are intertwined, and how we deal with the danger defines how we will see and benefit from the opportunity.

No surprise, *Wei Gi* is on my mind quite a bit these days.

I'm no economist, so I won't predict when this particular change will end. But I sure can tell you how to uncurl from the fetal position and calm your fears so you can see the opportunities when they present themselves.

If you are experiencing a sense of loss right now, you're in the first emotional stage of this change. Every change model with which I've worked defines this early, initial stage as *loss and/or fear*, and my work with clients confirms that we do in fact start from this place. In this stage, you are aware of what you have lost, and you are fearful about what will happen.

Your primitive brain takes over, and it's typical to freeze like a deer in the headlights, attempt to flee the situation, or just squish down the feelings and work harder, except that you feel like a hamster on a wheel, since you're not going anywhere.

You may even feel uncharacteristically sorry for yourself, like you're just a helpless victim of all of these economic disasters. Believe me, this is not the whole you talking. If you're a reader of this eZine, you're not someone who runs around with a victim mentality. This is your primitive brain doing its thing. It's just trying to keep you safe. It can't tell the difference between a recession and a saber-tooth tiger. It just knows something nearby seems threatening.

As journalist Dorothy Thompson said, "Only when we are no longer afraid do we begin to live." It's time to calm that primitive brain so you will no longer be afraid. Here are five

excellent tools you can use *right now* to calm your fears so you can see the opportunities presented by the change and begin to live again.

1. Learn more about why the change happened, and about the specifics of the change. I finally understood the mortgage meltdown after viewing a hysterical (if obscenity-laden) stick figure presentation deck my husband forwarded to me. It was clearer than all of the Wall Street Journal analyses combined and it helped to calm my fears simply by increasing my understanding of the key dynamics that led to the financial crisis.
2. Spend time with positive, healthy people whom you find to be calming. This is good for your mental health at any time, but is particularly important when you are in a state of shock. An alternative some individuals prefer is to write in a journal. Others find a combination of the two works best.
3. If you are in a long-term relationship, don't keep your feelings to yourself. Talk with your partner. Begin by sharing your feelings of loss, fear, and anxiety, and asking how he or she feels about the changes. Then take it from there. Being in it together is often superior to being in it as two isolated individuals.
4. Count your blessings, not because you feel you should, but because they are really, truly still there for you. It is natural to focus on what you have lost. However, by consciously focusing on what you have, you can begin to bring a broader and more balanced perspective to the situation. What do you still have? Resourcefulness? Creativity? A loving, supportive relationship? Great kids? A manageable car payment? A good book to read this weekend? Large or small, these blessings are still in our lives, no matter how bleak the rest may be. Write them down.
5. My colleagues Mary Ann Salerno and Lillie Brock, who wrote the book I reviewed in the October 3 issue of *Traveling Light*, share this incredibly effective tip: write a personal vision statement in great detail: If the change turns out the best possible way, what does it look like for you?
 - What are you doing? Saying?
 - Where are you?
 - Who is with you?
 - How do you feel?
 - When is this happening?

Lillie once told me the story of a great survivor of change who used this very technique, a man who comes out of every change a better person. His name is Jim MacLaren. Jim was a world-class athlete who first lost his leg below the knee in 1985 when the motorcycle he was riding was broadsided by a 40,000 pound city bus.

Although initially pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital, Jim recovered and once again began setting records, this time in triathlons, where he often beat many of the able-bodied athletes.

Then, in 1993, while competing in a triathlon, he was hit by a van that had mistakenly been directed on to the closed street. He was thrown into a lamp post and his neck was broken, leaving him paralyzed.

While in the hospital, Jim created this personal vision statement: "Within one year, I am at the beach with my girlfriend when I walk at least 10 feet on my own. The feeling is like

winning another race with an extra special prize at the end. My life is full and I am grateful for the lesson.”

Jim knew that his prognosis was grim, and that his doctors did not believe he would regain the use of his limbs. When asked by an incredulous interviewer why he had this seemingly unattainable vision, he responded that when he woke up in the middle of the night, his visitors gone, his hospital room empty, unable to move, his vision calmed him so he could go back to sleep and face another day.

Jim did eventually regain some use of his limbs, and he went on to build a successful motivational speaking business and found the Choose Living Foundation, a philanthropic organization that supports a wide variety of causes.

Change = Danger + Opportunity. Calm your fears about the danger and you will see the opportunity and begin to live again.

News

I've just returned from my trip to Portland to give a talk about how your gender and personality impact your financial attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. I had a wonderful time. My talented sister took pictures, which I'll post in the next issue. It looks like next I will be taking the message to 700 Certified Financial Planners. Stay tuned for more details. My readers will be the first to know.

Announcing the birth of my blog! Yes, I've joined the world of bloggers at <http://jenniferselbylong.com/>. The blog is a concentrated resource for all of my articles, book reviews, and news, organized by topic. It's now the fastest way to find an article from a past newsletter.

We'll continue to post past articles and newsletter at <http://www.selbygroup.com/news.html> as well.

Contact us for further information at: lighten@selbygroup.com.

To subscribe, go to www.selbygroup.com and click on the Free Newsletter link.

Past copies of this newsletter are archived on our web site: www.selbygroup.com.

© 2008 Jennifer Selby. All rights reserved.

Please forward this newsletter to anyone or use its contents. I ask only that you maintain the copyright and attribution.

Jennifer Selby Long
Selby Group