NEW AMERICA

Crisis Conversations: Lifequake Now

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BRIGID SCHULTE, HOST: Welcome, everyone, to another edition of *Crisis Conversations* Live from the Better Life Lab. I'm Brigid Schulte, the director of the Better Life Lab, and today I'm delighted to welcome, Bruce Feiler. He is a *New York Times* best-selling author. He's done such fascinating things in his life. *Walked the Bible*, set up a *Council of Dads,* and his most recent book that's just come out-- I'll hold it up for everybody, you can see on my cheat sheet notes backwards there. It's called *Life in the Transitions: Mastering Change at Any Age*.

Bruce, we're delighted to have you on here today because I think it's not too hard to say that the entire globe is in the middle of a something that you would call a life quake. That's where I want to start. We've got people who are struggling, they're out of work, they're sick, they've had loved ones who have died. There's so much uncertainty and fear. How do we--? You talk about navigating these life quakes with skill and purpose. Now, I'm not going to ask you to answer that on the very first question, but let's begin talking about, what are life quakes?

What is this pandemic when you think about it in terms of what we tend to go through in our lives? Then we'll move into how we handle it with grace, skill, and purpose.

BRUCE FEILER, PANELIST: First of all, thank you very much for inviting me and I just want to say that I'm a bit of a fanboy of yours. I've admired your work for many years. For me, you're one of those gatekeepers that if you're interested in a topic, then I'm going to be interested in it. I'm just deeply flattered that you're interested in my work. Thank you very much for having me. A life quake is essentially what we're in now. It is a massive life change that is higher on the Richter scale of consequences of normal life changes and it has aftershocks that last for years.

Some life quakes are voluntary like having children or moving or starting a new venture, but many of them are involuntary like a diagnosis or a downsizing or a pandemic. I became interested in this because I went through a life quake. I had what I now think of as a linear life. I discovered what I wanted to do early in my life. I did it

for no money for a while. I had some success. I got married. I had children. Then in my 40s, I was just walloped by life. I had a back to back to back set of crises.

First, I got cancer as a new dad. Then I asked a group of friends to form a Council of Dads for my daughters as you know and that recently became a series on NBC. I almost went bankrupt in the recession. Then my dad who had Parkinson's tried to take his own life. Actually six times in 12 weeks.

BRIGID: Yes, that was very powerful how you write about that in the book.

BRUCE: It was scary and we didn't know what to do. We were dealing with medical and work and I'm the story guy. I'm the meaning guy, so on a whim, I started this thing as where every Monday morning, I would send him a question about his life. Tell me about the house you grew up, the toys you played with, how'd you become an eagle scout, join the navy, how'd you meet mom. This man who never had written anything longer than a memo like backed into writing an autobiography. I became incredibly obsessed with this idea that when our lives go through these changes, we have to rethink, rewrite, and update our life stories.

When I started to share the story bridging with other people, everybody had a story. Like my wife had a headache and went to the hospital to die. My boss is a crook, I'm being sued. My brother has stage four cancer. I thought everybody was saying the same thing like the life I'm living is not the life I expected like somehow I'm living life out of order. My process is I look for-- there must be a book out there that will give us answers. I couldn't find one and I said, "Well, I'm going to go on this journey." I set out. I crisscross the country as you said.

I gathered what became 225 life stories. The most that's ever been gathered in this process all ages, all walks of life, all 50 states. People lost homes, lost limbs, changed careers, changed religions, got sober, got out of bad marriages. Then I got a team of 12 people and we spent a year, a year combing through these, coding them looking for patterns that can help all of us survive, and thrive in times of change.

The big ideas as we go through these life quakes, we'll get into that. Lo and behold, for the first time in a century, the entire planet is going through a life quake at literally the exact moment this book decides to come out.

BRIGID: Exactly. It's interesting you talked about-- you have the expectation that your life was linear that one thing would lead to another. You talk about some of the experts

who say we have these Uber narratives that we either have these ascending linear trajectories or these descending, but that really what life really is these oscillations of ups and downs and that and chaos and figuring it out and then getting lost. It just as you say, here is everybody now getting lost all at the same time. How do we navigate this individually, but then also collectively together? This is something we're all going through together at the same time.

BRUCE: Because I have the false intimacy I feel I know you through your work. I want to geek out for a second on the science because, for me, the trap door that opened this all up was discovering something that was entirely new to me which is that our each culture has a way of understanding the shape of our life. That the ancient world I spent a lot of time there, they didn't have linear time. They thought life followed the season. Life was cyclical to every season turn, turn, turn. In the middle ages, they think life is a staircase up to middle age, we peak, and then it's downhill from there.

The way we were grown up basically since the 20th century, we were told that life is a linear hour of progress. **[unintelligible 00:05:56]** has these stages, Piaget has these stages, Erickson's eight stages. This reaches its five stages of grief, *The Hero's Journey*, these are all linear constructs and this reaches its peak with **[unintelligible 00:06:07]** in the '70s who writes passages which all of our mothers read that said everyone does the same thing in their 20s, same thing in their 30s and then everyone has a midlife crisis at 39 and a half. Literally, it said the midlife crisis must start by 39 and will end by 45.

BRIGID: Not to interrupt you, but it strikes me that's so much of the narrative that I grew up with. Then if you're not experiencing that you feel something's wrong with you. I've certainly had experiences like that in my life. It's like, "Oh, I'm not doing the right thing." I wonder if it has that additional stress and anxiety that we're all trying to figure out how to live a good life and there's no one or easy answer.

BRUCE: It's what I call the should train. Like you should be doing this, right?

BRIGID: Oh, that's good.

BRUCE: What's interesting about this is-- what really goes on now is that lives are non-linear. Some people have that path, some people are born into a crisis if their family is falling apart. Some people will lose a parent as a teenager. I talked to a person who's a tenured MIT professor defining crisis in his life. He was a heroin addict in his 20s when

he got sober at 26 and a half. Some people are-- start a new job in their 60s, move in their 70s. I call it the whenever life crisis.

BRIGID: Yes, that's good.

BRUCE: What my data show is that we all go the pace of change is quickening so that we have three dozen times in our lives. Every 12 to 18 months, we go through what I call a disrupter. Could be small like having an accident or moving, getting new responsibilities at work, could be bigger like getting married, having a child, changing your career, becoming an empty nester. Most of these, we get through. We're actually pretty good at adapting to change, but 1 in 10 of them, three to five times in our lives, we get hit by one of these life quakes.

That leads me to the answer to your question, which is the life quake might be voluntary. You start a new venture, you try something new. It may be involuntary. You get an illness or you've just lost your job, but the transition that comes out of it must be voluntary. When you first get hit by the life quake, one of two things happens, either you feel chaotic and out of control or you feel sluggish and stuck. Like, "Am I be okay?" "There's nothing I could do," when you lie in the fetal position or you just--

BRIGID: I've done all of those things at different times in my life. Yes. [chuckles]

BRUCE: You're in this state of shock and then the first thing is-- People took one piece of advice from this at the beginning, it would be decide or lean into the transition. Once you get into the transition, then there's this road map that I teased out. As you know, life is in the transitions. It has the first new model for how to navigate these life transitions in 50 years. I think that's just a quick point I'll make before we move on which is this idea of transition has been a little bit out of favor.

You and I share an interest in a lot of the conversation of how we live, the sociology of this, and the books on psychology. This isn't really an idea that's been out there because people had this notion that we had a midlife crisis or that they happened at birthdays that end in zero. It's an old-fashioned idea that I'm trying to popularize again. Lo and behold, the pandemic did it for me because you might be between 39 and 45 right now, in which case, you're having the old-fashioned mid-life crisis, but you might be 28 or 32 or 57 or 68, or in the case of my identical daughter, 15, we're all going through it right now.

BRIGID: Exactly. What do we do? Give us some lifelines. I hesitate to ask this now, but I loved that you wrote a piece in *The New York Times* recently and you talked about the Lupus in Fabula. The big bad wolf. It's somebody whose father would do the bills and always grown that the wolf was at the door. Honestly, led to an entire lifetime of fear of finances and money that the wolf was always going to be at the door. Talk about the big bad wolf and especially now, we've got a global gigantic big bad wolf knocking at all of our doors.

You talk about we need the wolf and yet you're talking about lean into this discomfort. I love how you quote Pema Chödrön, who's like one of my favorites, lean into this discomfort. When you push away from it, you're not taking advantage of what you could learn but we hate wolves. We don't want them at the door. It's scary.

BRUCE: Without the wolf, there's no fairytale and without the wolf, there's no hero. Look, I think it stopped for a second and listen to that story going on in your head. It's the story of who you are and where you came from, where you're going in your life, who you want to be. Imagine now if you've got a call that you had to rush to the hospital, like what would be going through your head? That is called the story of your life. That story is not part of you. That story is you, in a fundamental way.

The story that we would like our life to be is forged actually in adolescents in a lot of ways. It's a fairytale. It's a superhero story. We think the fairytale has a hero and a happy ending but what all fairytales have is a wolf. Is it the wolf appears or a dragon or an ogre or a downsizing or a diagnosis or a tornado or a pandemic? The truth is that's when it becomes a story. Story is about conflict and resolution. Without the wolf, you don't have a story and without the wolf, you don't have a hero. With that frame is that this is a hero making moment for all of us.

When you first go into this life transition to address the other part of your question is it looks like an endless, empty terrain or like a forest. The Hindus call it forest dwelling. The Abrahamic base, it's like desert dwelling. It turns out, look at enough of them, and I talked to who all of these different people, hundreds of them who went through incredible changes and there's a pattern. The first thing that's worth thinking about here is that there are three phases to life transitions. There's the long goodbye, where we'll confront our emotions and say goodbye to the old you.

There's what I call the messy middle, which is where you shed habits and you create new ones. Then there's the new beginning where we begin to unveil our new self. In the

old way, like the 20th century way of talking about transitions, they said you must do these in order. You must first say goodbye and that turns out to be **[inaudible 00:12:45]**. Also, it turns out that everybody's good at one phase and they're bad at another. One piece of advice I would say is one of things I walk you through in life is in the transitions to identify what's your superpower and what's your kryptonite.

Like some people are good at saying goodbye. I talked to a woman whose mother died at 19. She's had three marriages and lots of different career changes. She says, "I under attached to things." Like, I'm good at saying goodbye. I like the messy middle. Then I talk to people who it's difficult for them to say goodbye. They stick around too long and I talked to a guy named Rob Adams who was hired to run the Simon Pearce, glass company in Vermont. He moved his family from the Midwest to Vermont. He starts a month after 9/11, sales dropped by a third.

Not after 9/11, after the great recession, sales dropped by a third in the first three months. He should have moved on quicker. It's a family run business. It took a year. He said, "I hated saying goodbye because I liked coaching, leading, and my colleagues," but once he got to the messy middle, it turned out-- he was like, "I'm a consultant. I was on it. I made to-do-lists and I said this is what we're going to do." He moved his family to Africa to run a nonprofit. There are these phases you're going to be good at something and start there and your transition will go more effectively.

BRIGID: It's funny you talk about the difficulty of saying goodbye. I think if people who, like myself, might've stayed in a job a little too long because there is this human desire to try to want to make it work. There's something wrong with me that I can't figure out how to make it work. Does leaning into that being ability to say goodbye also mean sitting with that discomfort? Does it require also believing in yourself or believing that there could be another option and where does story or the power of narrative come in there?

BRUCE: There's three phases to these transitions and I have seven tools that will help you make it go easier. We won't have time to go into all of them but I want to start with the one you just said. The first thing that it requires like the first tool is what I call accepted. It's to identify the emotion that you're struggling with. I sat across from these hundreds of people in all 50 states. I would begin with narrative like, "Tell me the story of your life in 15 minutes." Most people took an hour and then I would do things like high point of your life and low point.

By this point, I've been with them for an hour and a half or two hours and we'd identified a big transition. I said, "Let's go through the micro-steps of how you navigated it and let me see what we can learn." The first question I asked was what emotion did you struggle most within your time of change? Number one answer, fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of not having money, fear of what people are going to think, fear if this is going to work. Number two answer, sadness. It's bad for what I've lost.

I liked it in the old way. I liked that job. I liked being married. I liked having my mom around. I'd like it before the pandemic. Then the third was shame and that gets to what you said. Maybe I'm ashamed that I've lost my job. I'm a shame that I have a drinking problem and that my kids have turned their back on me. I'm ashamed that I've lost status in some way because of a change that's come over me. I'm ashamed but I was too attached to my kids and now I'm an empty nester. The first step is to accept these emotions but then what do you do with them?

I said, "How did you respond?" Some people write them down. That's valuable for some people. Other people do this way like head down, buckle down, stop whining, get to work. 80% of people use rituals of some kind. Some of these people are maybe spiritual-minded but most of them are not. They didn't even do it thinking it was a thing but they had a party. I talked to somebody who was born male-bodied and felt she was a woman, was trapped downtown on 9/11, covered in soot. She thought if she decided to transition that she would be ostracized by her family, lose her friends, and her job.

I think she was working at Lego at the time. She said, "I would rather be alone but not be true to myself." She decided to transition. She threw a hormone party to acknowledge that the past was not coming back to people. I talked to a woman who had a really tough year. She was a bone marrow donor to her brother. She lost her job. She had a fight with her mother. She went on 52 first dates. Then she said, "This isn't working." She had a fear of heights. She jumped out of an airplane to say if I can get over this fear, I can get over my fear of the future.

A year later, she was married and pregnant with a child. There's something about rituals that allow us to say both to ourselves and to those around us that we're making progress. We're taking steps here. We've passed this past and we're ready for what's going to come next. However scary it might be.

BRIGID: It's really interesting that sense of fear and that-- I guess it's like in some of the things that you've written before the first step is to just take a step or to try. We have a couple of questions in the chat and Jahdziah St. Julien, who is our program assistant and helps a lot with this podcast. She has a question. Jahdziah, can you unmute yourself and pose the question to Bruce?

JAHDZIAH ST. JULIEN, CALLER: Sure. Hi, Bruce.

Bruce: Thank you for your help. I love your name. I'm actually seeing it in print for those of you who are listening to audio. J-A-H-D-Z-I-A-H. Love it.

JAHDZIAH: Thank you so much. Thank you for everything that you've been sharing thus far. It's very relatable to my own life and I'm sure to so many people who are navigating the pandemic right now. My question does have a little bit to do with this idea of life transitions, particularly during this moment of the pandemic. I'm just thinking about the extent to which there are certain life transitions that appear to be universal almost. The idea of having a child or navigating work and changes in employment. These are things that people are going to experience across their lifetime but so many people are experiencing them now.

I'm wondering to what extent do you think it would be helpful or important for even our policymakers to think about life quakes or to have some familiarity with the term and even with just the information that you present in your book and what would that mean for creating certain policies that can support so many people within our society? What is that conversation between creating policies and understanding this idea this reality of life quakes?

BRUCE: You're egging me on. You were just prodding me out a moment and getting me to where my heart is. Let me just say a couple of things here really quickly. I'll try to answer your question very directly but first thing I want to say about the pandemic is that I mentioned this earlier for the first time in a century. Collective involuntary life quake. As you know, Brigid, because you were kind enough to read my book. I analyzed every transition in terms of was it voluntary or involuntary, biggest one in people's lives. Voluntarily was 47%, involuntary was 53%.

It was interesting that I was born in 1964, so I'm on the cusp of the boomers and the Xers. I thought, "Wow, 47% are voluntary," and I had a bunch of millennial coders with me. They were like really 53% are involuntary. People have this different reaction and

then I did personal or collective. This is an involuntary collective life quake. That would be like a natural disaster, 9/11. These are involuntary collective life quakes. The life quake is universal but the transitions that are going to come out of them are going to be particular to every person. Everybody listening to us is going to have a different thing.

Do I have a job? If I have a job, is that the job that I wanted to have? Do I need to quit my job? Do I take care of my family? Each person, this is going to trigger to use that word in a positive way, not a negative way, trigger a particular evaluation but the particular point I want to make for addressing the policy issue here is to say that Xers get this idea to change is happening faster more than boomers and millennials, more than Xers.

I think that the millennials understand inherently there was a time that-- I only talked to people over 40 because I needed people who'd been beat up by life a little bit. My wife, Linda Rotenberg, who runs an organization endeavor that helps entrepreneurs around the world and has 500 more or less millennials working for her. She said no and it turns out to your question about narrative, everybody has a life story. I think millennials are more used to this idea. They know they're going to have 15.7 jobs and 11.7 moves.

I read a statistic recently that my kids are 15 like teenagers today, half of the jobs that they're going to have have never been invented yet because technology and AI are coming so fast. We have to accept that we're in a period of constant change and then that leads to the policy question. I actually had a conversation with an educator this morning. We were talking about how schools need to respond to this moment. The inspiration for this, Brigid, was work I did on the importance of family narrative.

The children who understand that their lives will take an oscillating shape and know more about their family history or better able to navigate the world. It's the number one projector of a child's emotional well-being. I've wrote about this in *New York Times*, an article called *Stories That Bind Us* and it is the beginning of life isn't the transitions. I actually think that an education point of view, we need to figure out even how to take the moment that we're in now and say as painful and difficult as it is, it's actually a training ground for life transition skills.

That's like almost like you need to understand your narrative is going to have wolves and interruptions if you're an adolescent. When you turn to colleges, obviously college is going through its own transition right now. College is the first time that people in college are going to go through a collective transition together. What is college like

saying goodbye to your old self when you were living at home, going through a messy middle, finding herself, "Do I want to make these choices or do I want to be doing my homework? Do I want to be a partier? Who do I want to be? What I want?"

That's it, that's the messy-- College is the messy middle that prepares you for the transition to come. I think educators to start thinking of school as a transition skill-based experience, as well as an intellectual and social experience, would be helpful. Then when you go to the workplace, what are the touchpoints? The touchpoints are parental leave. We need leave for dads as well as we need them for moms. The idea of parental leave.

BRIGID: We also say family leave because you also needed to take care of yourself. You needed to take care of older people. It's not just parental leave that needs to be a part of a much larger solution.

BRUCE: That's the point I was going to make next. If you need it when the kids are born but you could make a very strong case that we all should have in our back pocket. A parental leave sabbatical when our kids are teenagers or our parents are aging. What's going on? Parents aging, being born. What are those? Those are moments of transition. These are moments that for most of human history were largely dealt with in the world of religion and spirituality and those kinds of community organizations. Now, we're in a world where those institutions as much as I personally love them, are losing power and influence and we are turning to the workplace.

What's going on? You now have three-quarters of women working outside the home. You have dads and much more involved in parenting. These are all moments of transition. I think under using this language will be very constructive for all of us to start to say there are tools, there are skills, and this is what I've tried to do in life is in the transitions is, lay them out there actual things we can do.

BRIGID: At this point, let me go to a fantastic researcher, great friend, mentor, Brad Harrington, who's with the Boston College Center for Work and Family. Brad, you had a question. I would love to bring you on.

BRAD HARRINGTON, CALLER: Yes, can you hear me okay?

BRIGID: Yes, I can hear you fine.

BRUCE: I can and I've learned a lot from your institution's work over the years and so it's a pleasure to be with you.

BRAD: Thanks. We've been writing a lot on fatherhood for the last decade as you may know. I know you wrote a book which I'm going to run out and buy now that I remembered that, Bruce. The comment I wanted to make and with a question. I've been teaching a course for years at Boston College. The course is now called Finding and Following your Calling. It's for seniors at BC. We use one of your articles which is the stories that bind us.

I think you just referred to a minute ago which I think is a terrific thought piece but one of the things I've had students do and I did this for 10 years in the MBA program and now 10 years with BC seniors. The courses intended to help them think about how they're going to make their transition from the four years of college to the next stage they liked. The first exercise I always give them, Bruce, which you will probably find that's a good idea, as they walked in the first week and I say, "By next week, I'd like you to have written and turned in a 20-page autobiography."

At first, they sit there and go, "What? I could never fill 20 pages." I give them mine as an example. Just as a template to look at. In terms of the degree of depth, I go into and so forth and what they talk about and not only what happened but how it felt when it happened. Invariably at the end of first semester, when they handed in, I say, "A, was it hard to do to fill 20 pages?" Almost every single kid says no. Not at all. Once they get going and the second, "Did you enjoy doing this thing?" This absolutely yes. There's a little sucking up that maybe may be going on and they **[inaudible 00:27:06]**.

BRUCE: Do that up in Boston that shocks me **[inaudible 00:27:11]** [crosstalk].

BRAD: At the end of the semester, I always ask what was the most valuable thing you did and almost to a person. I wrote my autobiography and that taught me so much about who I was, my calling, and where I was going in. The quick thing is A, if you haven't come out of that and then B, I've always encouraged people that I don't have the big stick of a grade or to take the time to do it and nobody ever does it, except students who need the grade. Any thoughts on that? Because I think it takes eight hours to do and it's life-changing if you do it.

BRUCE: That's why I love that story. As somebody who asks hundreds of people tell me the story of your life in 15 minutes. No one took 15 minutes. Everybody took an

hour. It was incredibly powerful because, in a fundamental way, both Brad and Brigid, what we're talking about here is that a life quake and like transition is an autobiographical occasion. It is occasion to rethink and rewrite your life story. You add a new chapter that says, "I went through a difficult time. I figured out how to get through it and now I'm moving forward."

The most important thing in the world of narrative identity is whether it was voluntary or involuntary, positive or negative. You want to nail the ending. You want to have a positive ending that says even though it was difficult, I learned something constructive and I'm going to move forward. I think that gets to really where this whole thing started about working with seniors is that basically, life transitions are fundamentally meaning-making experiences. We don't have time, Brigid, because we're wrapping up here to go into what I call the ABCs of meaning.

A is our agency, what we do in our work, and our B is our belonging. Our C is a cause or a calling that Brad was just talking about. What happens in these moments, you say, how do we make them positive and constructive? We say, do I have that balance right? Am I working too hard? I should focus more on my relationships. Maybe I've been a mom and I want to **[unintelligible 00:29:10]**, I want to give back. Maybe I've been giving back and I burned out. In these moments, there are occasions to revisit and rethink what gives us meaning and tweak it so that we're more balanced going forward.

As we wrap up here, I'll just say whatever you're struggling with now, I was there with you. I was very much struggling. I went out and found these people and they gave me hope and inspiration but more importantly, they gave me things to do. Whatever you're struggling with if you come on this journey and meet these people, we're going to give you something to do tonight, something next week, the week after, we're going to take whatever you're struggling with, whatever transition you're in, and we're going to make it go a little bit better, and a lot more effectively. We can get through together.

BRIGID: I want to ask one last question to think through this. So many of these crisis conversations that we've been having over the last months, they have been people who are really caught up in this whirlwind of how so much has been disrupted in our lives. Whether it's because of the pandemic, or the economic turndown, or this reckoning for racial justice. One of the things that we really struggle with or work on here at the Better Life Lab is how much is individual? How much agency do I have, should I have versus how much is systemic?

How much is it-- the circumstances that I find myself in whether it's structural racism, or deeply embedded cultural norms around gender, or discrimination? We've got public policies that do not support so many of our families or we've got systems that are broken and don't work. I guess that would be the last thing that I would ask, is you do want to have a sense of individual agency in your life. You're the only one living it and yet how can we work together in these transitions, in these moments. Like in the pandemic when so much has become clear that isn't working.

How do we work together to make those systems better to change our larger story if you will? In the United States, we're supposed to be this land of opportunity, and we are not. How do we change that larger collective narrative to actually get there and make that transition?

BRUCE: I think the protest movement that you brought up is a very interesting example of this because we've talked about the pandemic as a collective involuntary life quake. With the protest movement and Black Lives Matter and anti-racism and all of the initiatives that have come out of this, this is actually a voluntary collective life quake. It's something that we were all deciding that now there is this reckoning and we want to act about it. I want to make perhaps an unusual analogy but I want to go back to 9/11.

In the wake of 9/11, I wrote a book about Abraham as the shared ancestor of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. I did a lot of interfaith work. The thing that I learned from that that seems incredibly potent to the question you just asked me is that, can we get along? We were in that moment, it looked like we were going to have a global religious war among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. I did hundreds of interfaith events.

I used to say the same thing at the end which is this is so important that we can't sit back and say, "I hope they solve that problem over there in the Middle East. I hope they get that problem done in Iraq or whatever it is." We all have to do something in our own community, and our own neighborhood, in our own block. I gave people the way to have small living room interfaith conversations. Abraham salons, I called them. That's what I feel like we've learned in the protest movement, which is this problem was built into America.

This was written into the constitution and many of the defining moments in American history from the civil war to the civil rights movement. We're about taking it and we now appear to be in this moment and what have we learned? We can't say, "I hope they

solve that problem." We have to say, "In my workplace, am I doing something? In my family, am I doing something? In my neighborhood, am I doing something? In my heart, am I doing something? With my own children?" That's been the big takeaway. For me, that's been incredibly positive. That's what I feel about the pandemic.

We may not be able. We can wear a mask and we can socially distance and wash our hands but we're not going to be able to cure the vaccine. What we can do is reflect and look in the mirror and say, "What is the change that I want to make?" Because the brutal reality is we're not going back. I'm a little bit grumpy about the word resilience because it implies you're going back. You're going to bounce back. In fact, resilience comes from a spring. It's actually a physics word. The spring, it gets pulled out and it bounces back. We're not going back.

Some people may go back but more of us are going to go sideways, or forward, or to a different direction entirely. The reason that my book is called *Life in the Transitions,* which as you know is a William James line from 100 years ago with the birth of modern psychology is we're going to have these life quakes. That's the message. They're going to come more frequently than we expect and they're going to last longer than we want.

Rather than looking at them as periods that we have to grit, or grind, or suffer our way through, if we don't look at them as opportunities to grow and recreate ourselves and reimagine ourselves, there'll be some sadness. We talked about saying goodbye. You can go to a different place. If you do not, then you are throwing away half of your life waiting for the better parts to come and that is not. You're going to get the wolf. The wolf is at the door. Your father was right in a way.

It may not be the wolf that he expected, but what he taught you is that you're going to get the wolf and it's often when you least expect it. Remember the wolf pops out. What this thing gave me was more tools to fight that wolf than I ever thought imaginable. Now, when the wolf pops up, I feel like, "Okay. I got 20 tools. If this one doesn't work, I'm going to try that." What I'm going to try and do in life as I'm in the transition is pass along the tools.

Like my wife said, "I don't care what you think, tell me what they're thinking." What I did is go out and find other people, find out what they did, you're going to feel inspired to make the change more efficiently in your own life.

BRIGID: Well, Bruce, thank you so much for joining us today. We are out of time. Thank you all to the participants for joining us. I think that's a wonderful place to leave. That's so much of what we're working on here at The Better Life Lab, how do we learn from this current moment. That's the point of these *Crisis Conversations* to emerge better, more equitable, fairer, healthier, and stronger as human beings, as a communities, and as a country. Thank you so much.

I'd also like to thank the New America events team, my one wonderful teammates on The Better Life Lab, all the people who've tuned in, we hope that you will come back. Next week, we're going to be talking about pregnancy, maternal health, and pregnancy discrimination in the pandemic. In the meantime, stay safe, wash your hands and we'll see you next week.