



## **Seven Life Lessons of Chaos: Spiritual Wisdom from the Science of Change**

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*John Briggs, F David Peat*

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Présentation de l'éditeur

If you have ever felt your life was out of control and headed toward chaos, science has an important message: Life *is* chaos, and that's a very exciting thing! In this eye-opening book, John Briggs and F. David Peat reveal seven enlightening lessons for embracing the chaos of daily life. **Be Creative:**

engage with chaos to find imaginative new solutions and live more dynamically **Use Butterfly Power:**

let chaos grow local efforts into global results **Go With the Flow:**

use chaos to work collectively with others **Explore What's Between:**

discover life's rich subtleties and avoid the traps of stereotypes **See the Art of the World:**

appreciate the beauty of life's chaos **Live Within Time:**

utilize time's hidden depths **Rejoin the Whole:**

realize our fractal connectedness to each other and the world Life is impossible to control--instead of fighting this truth, *Seven Life Lessons of Chaos* shows you how to accept, celebrate, and use it to live life to its fullest. From Publishers Weekly

Attempting to extract lessons for daily living from the emerging science of chaos theory, Briggs, a professor of English at Western Connecticut State University, and Peat, a British physicist, have produced an often frustrating, intermittently suggestive guide. Chaos scientists seek hidden patterns underlying apparently random events. By heeding their example, the authors maintain, ordinary folk can learn to appreciate the interconnectedness of all things, to go with the flow of events, to unlock creativity through heightened tolerance for ambiguity and ambivalence, to pay attention to subtlety, to act according to one's internal rhythms. Skipping fluidly from irrational numbers to Zen paradoxes, from Vaclav Havel's notion of "the power of the powerless" to the I Ching to the egalitarian, "self-organizing" interactions of an Ojibway Indian community and Manhattan's food distribution system, the authors use chaos as an overworked metaphor in a barrage of analogies, speculative leaps, platitudes and anecdotes. Their unconvincing manual is riddled with sentences like, "Positive butterfly power involves a recognition that each individual is an indivisible aspect of the whole and that each chaotic moment of the present is a mirror of the chaos of the future." Scores of intriguing photographs (66 b&w; eight pages color), which form an integral part of the book, reinforce points about the dynamics of change and the liberating potential of chaos with images of colliding galaxies, Ice Age cave paintings, a traffic jam, a craggy British coastline, plots of heart rhythms.

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There would have been no *Jurassic Park* without it. There is a perfume named after it. It is chaos, whose theory is the hottest one in science since relativity. The most powerful part of its allure is the relevance of chaos theory to human life struggles, yet no earlier book more than alluded to that connection. Briggs and Peat, whose *Turbulent Mirror* (1990) is one of the best popular books on the science of chaos (Briggs also wrote the lavish *Fractals* [1992] on chaos art), now give us a book that introduces the major ideas of chaos and shows how they can be used metaphorically. For instance, sensitive dependence upon initial conditions, or the butterfly effect, is the phenomenon of a tiny action, when amplified throughout a system, having unexpectedly disproportionate effects. (It is called *butterfly* after the chaos theory canard that a butterfly flapping its wings in China can cause a thunderstorm--or hurricane--in New York.) Apply this to politics, say, and apparently small initiatives can produce enormous changes. Briggs and Peat are careful to differentiate between scientific fact and metaphor, unlike some popular but often inaccurate self-help writers. The combination of factual exactitude and imaginative application makes this the best book on chaos yet.

*Patricia Monaghan*

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