

And I WILL NOT Hatch!

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By Shel Silverstein

Oh, I am a chickie who lives in an egg,
But I will not hatch, I will not hatch.
The hens they all cackle, the roosters all beg,
But I will not hatch, I will not hatch.
For I hear all the talk of pollution and war,
As the people all shout and the airplanes roar,
So I'm staying in here where it's safe and it's warm,
And I WILL NOT HATCH!

It's spring – that wonderful time of the year when new life starts making an appearance. In the spring, we talk about life renewing itself, being young and new again. What have you seen that lets you know its spring? So many of those cute little animal babies are symbols of Easter, the day we celebrate today – lambs, bunnies, and chicks. You can even find all of them in chocolate this time of year!

And, when you listen to this poem, can't you just see the downy little fellow, huddled inside the cozy roundness of the egg? Not too big, not too small – a space that is safe and comfortable and just so. The eggshell is so convenient, providing protection from the outside world, creating a space where the “chickie” is comfortable and familiar.

Let's all take a moment and be that chick – let's get into our comfortable place – into our shell. Tuck our wings into your bodies and curl up inside that safe place. Get all of our parts arranged just so, so we can be inside there and fit just right. In your safe place, you're protected from the world. You're safe! Everything is just the way you know it and want it to be.

The little chick in the poem has heard about how scary the world outside of his shell might be, so despite the pleading of those who are hovering around, he's decided to stay right there inside, tucked into its comfy space. This chickie's intentions are quite clear – “I will not hatch.”

What a strategy! What a great fantasy! Have you ever thought about just wanting to stay safely tucked away in YOUR egg? What about when you're frightened or scared? What about when you have to do something that you don't really want to do?

I think that being able to stay in one's egg can sound just great – to never have to hatch and face the trials of the world outside. I know that sometimes I want to be safe and comfortable and I don't want to have to do what I don't want to do – when I feel scared or overwhelmed. And, sometimes, what I hear about the going on in the world – well, that can make me scared, too. I really want to stay inside a shell. You may be able to find this place within yourself, as well.

The chickie's obviously thought it over and decided not to hatch. But, I wonder if that's really gonna work?

PART II: So, back to our chick who decided not to hatch. One day it happens! Things GROW, and then the day comes when the egg no longer fits that chick!

I'll bet it's happened to you, too. In humans, Mom's womb is a wonderful place for babies while they develop, supplying all of the tiny person's needs. But, as the time for birth nears, the womb gets crowded and both mom and baby get a bit uncomfortable. If the baby overstays its welcome in its mother's body, did you know that the womb actually becomes a harmful environment?

Life favors growth and moving on to the next stage, not just for babies, but for all of us. Sometimes you gotta hatch! We have to give up being safe where we are and move into new things, new experiences, and new ideas. It's time to grow!

So, let's imagine we're in our shell again, safe and comfortable, all tucked inside. Now, imagine that you start to grow – and grow – and grow! You're getting too big for your shell! It's not so comfortable and safe now, is it?

What used to fit us well, what used to work for us, isn't making life work very well anymore. What are we gonna have to do?

Part III:

What are we gonna have to do? We're going to have to hatch! Yup – even though we feel fear and excitement, and maybe uncertainty, we have to hatch!

We may be tempted to try to keep things as they are, to try and stay in our shell. But, as author Anais Nin reminds us, the day comes when remaining tight in a bud is more painful than the risk it takes to blossom. Fear might constrict us and encourage us to stay within our comfort zone. But a full and fulfilling life includes growth, and there are ways to move through our fears and into new frontiers in our lives. We have to hatch!

Self-help guru Anthony Robbins says that the word fear is an acronym for False Events Appearing Real. He isn't completely correct; there are some real dangers in life; and our fear can be healthy if it helps protect us in those situations.

When it's time to hatch, we are motivated to move through fear to create new opportunities. It can happen in many ways, but two stand out. First, we are often willing to move into the unknown because it has become too confined, uncomfortable, or difficult to remain where we are. When we feel that, we take the risk to change, even if we are unsure of the outcome. Rosa Parks, whose actions challenged the painful restrictions of unjust laws, has said: "I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear."

The other way we move through our fear is thinking of the good things we will create as a result of the changes we make. Because we perceive the coming outcome as so desirable, so rewarding, we are willing to step out and take a chance. To achieve our desired outcome, we are willing to take the risk.

I remember years ago when I learned to drive. I was always good at written tests, so I passed my driver's test just fine. Then, my dad said the most scary and wonderful thing to me as we left the DMV – "Here's the keys." Now, we drove a Pontiac station wagon at that time – a ocean liner on four wheels – and I was scared to death to drive that big thing (and it had a clutch, too.) But I want to drive so badly, I wanted to be free and independent so much, that I pushed through my fear and I took the keys and lurched

around the parking lot until I got the hang of it. (And, despite what Carl says, I'm a pretty good driver today!)

No matter what changes life brings our way, it's important to build up our trust in ourselves as a way to keep us from being immobilized by fear. Our goal is developing our sense of trust in ourselves to the point where we know that whatever happens in our life, we can handle it, that we have the internal and external resources to figure it out and make it through. Our answer to those nagging questions of "What if...?" has to be, "I'll handle it," if we want to experience the fear and still be willing to follow our dreams.

Fear never completely goes away – it has a bad habit of sneaking up on you when you least expect it, or need it, for that matter. When it shows up, acknowledge it, feel it, learn from whatever wisdom it holds, then take action and "do it" anyway.

If we think we can wait to take action until the fear goes away, we're kidding ourselves. In reality, "doing it" comes before the fear goes away. Taking action reduces fear, not the other way around. Our Unitarian Universalist Principles encourage our search for meaning and spiritual growth throughout our lives. As an expression of this value, we must find a place for the useful and friendly use of our fears, in service to our continued spiritual and personal development.

Regardless of that chickie's feelings of fear, the bird will have to hatch! Despite feeling fearful, all of us must, at one time or another, leave the shell of our comfortableness and take the risk to hatch. May the rising hope represented by the spring of the year help us develop our confidence and trust we will be able to handle what we encounter in life. May we remember that we are part of a community and that others are here to provide support. May we discover the wonders and treasures available to those who take the risk to be alive in the world, those who allow themselves to come out of their shell. May we all hatch!

May it be so. Amen.