



## Crash? Panic? Black Monday. Falling Down. And what we do when the world begins to slip.

Market Crash. Black Monday 1987. *Falling Down*. Panic Attacks. And how to deal with all of that.

von Christian Rook

### Monday, April 7, 2025.

Asian markets opened deep in the red. The Nikkei dropped over 7%, the Kospi plummeted 5%, and Australia's main index fell more than 6%. Just last Friday, the US markets reacted strongly: the Dow Jones lost nearly 1,700 points, the Nasdaq fell by almost 6%. The trigger? Donald Trump's announcement of sweeping tariffs – a signal that sparked global uncertainty.

What reads like cold numbers on a stock ticker feels, in reality, existential. Uncertainty. Loss of control. Fear.

Not just among investors – but across boardrooms, leadership teams, and management circles. Markets don't just reflect prices. They reflect what happens when systems begin to lose their footing.

And in moments like this, I often find myself thinking beyond finance, beyond policy, beyond numbers:

**What happens to us – as human beings – when everything begins to slide?**

### Black Monday – and what lies beneath

Today feels eerily familiar. It reminds me of October 19, 1987 – *Black Monday* – the day the Dow Jones plunged more than 22% in a single session. The biggest one-day percentage drop in Wall Street's history.

The true shock, then and now, wasn't the fall in numbers. It was the sudden collapse of orientation. The deep, collective realization: *We are no longer in control.*

And that exact feeling – that loss of control – is something I know very well from my work in businesses.



Not just in their balance sheets. But in their people.

### A lasting image: Falling Down

There's one scene that always comes to mind when I think about these moments. The film *Falling Down*, starring Michael Douglas.

A man in a suit is stuck in traffic. It's hot. The engine's overheating. The window won't open. The noise around him is growing. The pressure builds. And then – one tiny thing too many.

He opens the door, steps out, and walks away.

He leaves his car. His role. The structure.

And what follows is a journey through a collapsing world – and through a psyche on the edge.

He doesn't snap because he's unstable.

He snaps because it's been *too much, for too long*. Too much compromise, too much frustration, too few ways out.

And all it takes is a spark.

This isn't fiction. I've seen it in real life.  
In leadership teams. In project groups.  
People mentally stepping out – not visibly, but internally.  
People who suddenly stop deciding. Who start skipping meetings because they “need to think.” Who stop replying to emails. Who retreat into operations but avoid any responsibility for the bigger picture.



### **I know that moment**

I'm a crisis manager. I'm brought in when things break down. When businesses lose clarity. When communication stalls, customers vanish, teams drift.

My job is to bring calm. Structure. Direction. Leadership.  
And most of the time, it works.  
But I also know how it feels when the rules suddenly don't apply anymore.  
When you notice – quietly, unmistakably – that *you're no longer fully present*.

I remember a time in my life when everything seemed under control – at least from the outside. But inside, I was drained. Quietly, slowly, invisibly. Until my body sent a signal I could no longer ignore: a collapse of control.

No drama. No explosion. Just... a complete shut-down. No access to myself. And I wrote a book about it to deal with that.

### **What happens to us in crisis – neurologically speaking**

When we reach such a threshold, something very specific happens in the brain.

The amygdala – our fear center – takes over. It flips into alarm mode. Everything becomes a potential threat.

Meanwhile, the prefrontal cortex – the part responsible for planning, foresight, self-regulation – is quite literally shut down.

Neuroscientist Alex Korb describes this in *The Upward Spiral*: when the amygdala is overactive, the rational mind loses its grip.

There are no strategic thoughts. Only fight, flight, or freeze.

It's biology. Not weakness. But it becomes dangerous when no one sees it. Because companies experience this too.

Entire organizations enter a frozen state. No decisions. No direction. No movement.

And no one dares say what everyone feels: *We are not functioning right now*.

### **What helps when everything begins to tip?**

Over the years, I've developed a kind of internal compass.

A simple, practical five-step method that I also apply in companies – whether I'm dealing with a turnaround, a restructuring, or a cultural crisis.

#### **1. Pause.**

No rash decisions. No reactive action.

Just stop. Take a breath.

Create space.

It sounds simple – but it's radical.

Sometimes, *doing nothing* is the bravest first step.

#### **2. Name it.**

What's actually going on?

Not what we fear. Not what we guess.

But what's real – and said out loud.

Fear thrives in vagueness.

Naming it takes away its power.

#### **3. Connect.**

Reconnect. With yourself. With others.

Leadership is not about being bulletproof.

It's about staying visible – especially when others withdraw.

#### **4. Structure.**

Not five-year plans. Not visions.  
Just one clear next step.  
Something small. Tangible. Executable.

In a crisis, it's not about scale – it's about traction.

#### **5. Stabilize.**

Values. Routines. Grounding.  
These give orientation when everything else spins.  
People don't look for certainty – they look for steadiness.  
And they look to those who lead.

#### **So what does that mean for us and for today?**

When markets fall, when uncertainty spreads, when customers pause, banks hesitate, and employees grow restless – we need people who stay in.  
Who show up. Who keep leading, even when they're unsure inside.

Because real leadership today isn't about control.  
It's not about having all the answers.  
It's about *clarity in uncertainty. Presence in panic. Direction in the fog.*

And if you feel like you're losing your own orientation – that's not weakness.  
It's a signal.  
And the most important thing is: don't stay alone.

Sometimes all it takes is a conversation, a question, a bit of structure – to get the system back on track.

And that's exactly what I'm here for.



**Christian Rook**  
[info@christianrook.com](mailto:info@christianrook.com)  
[www.christianrook.com](http://www.christianrook.com)