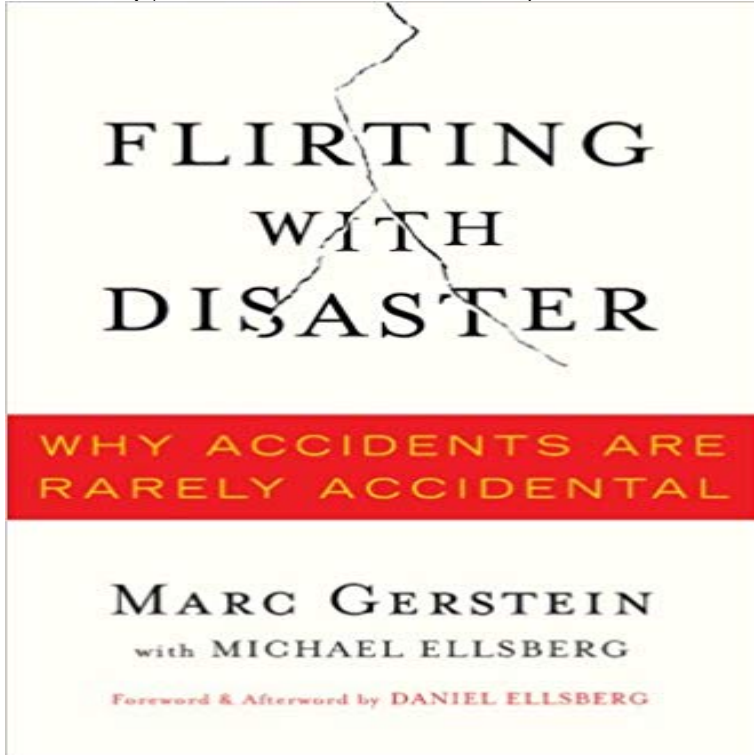


# Flirting with Disaster: Why Accidents Are Rarely Accidental



Chernobyl and Katrina. Challenger and Columbia. BP and Vioxx. The Iraq War. Were these unavoidable misfortunes that no one could possibly have imagined? Hardly. All of them were disasters that could have been prevented, or whose damaging repercussions could have been mitigated. Despite warnings of impending disaster, preemptive action is rarely taken by those who have the ability to do so. How do smart, high-powered people, leaders of global corporations, national institutions, even nations, often get it so wrong? While most investigations focus on the technical causes of disaster, *Flirting With Disaster* examines the psychological, social, and cultural impediments to whistle-blowing, showing what we can do to reduce the possibility of disasters happening at all. Analyzing such phenomena as bystander behavior and the butterfly effect, amid a series of instructive case studies--not only the aforementioned shuttle crashes, natural disasters, and industrial accidents, but also Arthur Andersen's shady accounting at Enron; the 1994 Mexican peso crisis that nearly caused an international monetary meltdown; and the American sub-prime lending crisis that emerged in August 2007, revealing the country's unhealthy dependence on consumer credit--Marc Gerstein, an organizational psychologist, urges a re-evaluation of the timidity, distorted thinking, errors of judgment and self-serving conduct that result in disasters from the boardroom to the halls of academe to the Oval Office. Daniel Ellsberg, renowned and respected for releasing the Pentagon Papers, offers a foreword and a powerful afterword addressing what happens When Leaders are the Problem. *Flirting With Disaster* is a must-read for those who want to foster truth-telling in their organizations, and head off-disasters in the making. At once alarming, entertaining and hopeful, this is a

