



Dealing with Adversity

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When I am asked to speak on this subject, I always open with a story that I was told many years ago. This story impacted the way I look at those difficult times we all must face. The story takes place many years ago with two Native Americans sitting by the campfire at night. It is an elderly grandfather and his grandson who are discussing life and its meaning. The grandfather looks over the fire into his grandson's eyes and states, "We all have a war going on inside us between the wolf and the eagle. Each one is a fierce and mighty warrior who is trying to defeat the other. The Wolf brings anger, revenge, hate, sadness, and despair which will eventually eat at your soul. The Eagle brings hope, joy, laughter, and love, which allows your soul to soar to new heights and to be aware of the beauty around you." The grandson was very silent and contemplative of the grandfathers' statement, but finally broke the silence with a question, "Grandfather, which one will win this war?" The grandfather looked deep into the eyes of his grandson and stated, "The one we feed."

This story instills the idea that we have more control than we realize in dealing with the stresses and changes in life we must all face at one time or another. We need to change the way we talk to ourselves about what is occurring in our life by always being grateful for the positive and dwelling on those times and situations that have brought joy to us. This internal dialog that we play in our mind will have drastic and sudden impact on our emotions when we change what we are thinking and dwelling on. We need to see things differently; we need to shine a light on those dark places in order for them to go away. We need to realize that life is filled with tragedy and celebration, fullness and emptiness, sadness and joy, moving within these extremes is part of what it means to be human – to be alive. We must learn and accept what life brings us in all its glory and all its emotion. We need to accept adversity – embrace the change and move on, strap ourselves in and go for this roller-coaster ride that we call life. We must always remember that life is not made up of how many breaths we take, but how many moments take our breath away.

Marnie Winston-Macauley, a well-known journalist when writing about the recent passing of Christopher Reeve wrote, despite the accident that left him a quadriplegic, he not only chose life, but also turned the harshest of detours into a new road of discovery and triumph. We rooted for him, watching his agonizing work to build body and spirit – his own, and those of others. What we learned from him is that our greatest teacher is adversity. Adversity tests our courage, forces us to create new solutions and imbues us with empathy for others and the world. We learned that our most important task is to conquer the demons that rob us of living full out, every moment of every day.

We need to take inventory of the signs or changes in our life that may be warning signs that we are in a state or condition that is contrary to our well-being. I have listed some of these signs that we need to be aware of:

- Restlessness or irritability
- Feeling depressed or sadness
- Feeling exhausted with no energy
- Not able to sleep
- Trouble getting out of bed in the morning
- Not feeling hungry or eating all the time.
- Isolation from friends – not doing things like before.
- Feeling angry and resenting others.
- Feeling life is unfair or has been stolen from you.

These feelings are normal at times, but they are not healthy and are warning signs for us that a new approach to our life needs to take place in order to win this battle.

There are some basic approaches to help you in this battle, but the change will only take place if you seek it and accept that a change needs to take place. Look at the list below and see how you can utilize these areas better in your life.

- **Nutrition** – Ask yourself are you eating what you know you should be. You are in double jeopardy if you are stressed both physically and emotionally. Take time and thought into what you are eating - this will impact both your well-being and energy level.
- **Exercise** – This is the dreaded word that most people hate but in reality it is one of the most important things you can do. Something as simple as taking a walk will calm your mind and awaken your body. Our bodies were meant to be used and moved, they were not designed for a La-Z-Boy.
- **Nature** – There is something spiritual and magical about nature. Learn to look and appreciate the wonders that surround you. We take far too much for granted when there are miracles and wonder all around us. Native Americans felt that nature was their best teacher and that it was lessons from the Great Spirit.
- **Socialize** – As humans, we are programmed to need others. Do not deprive yourself of human contact and the beauty of human interaction. Friends should be looked upon as a gift from God that needs to be renewed and refreshed. This is the time from us to also touch others. WE never know how important one moment or one statement might be to another in the grand scheme of things.
- **Thoughts** – Deprogram yourself from your negativity that you are constantly reviewing in your mind. There will always be times of crisis and sorrow, but they should not replace all the times of joy. We have the most powerful weapon in our arsenal and that is our thoughts. Some people see roses and are sad because they have thorns – yet others rejoice that thorns have roses. We need to see, look and believe differently if we wish to change our feelings and perceptions.
- **Live the moment** – This is the time we have, we do not know about the future and we cannot change the past. Life can change in a heartbeat. We need to grasp this moment of life and live it for all it's worth. Look upon this as a sacred moment and be aware of all glory that surrounds us.

- **Faith** – Give yourself permission to believe in a higher source other than yourself. You can find great strength and peace when you turn over your difficulties to another source and believe that some things cannot be explained with our limited comprehension but only accepted as part of our journey.

It is my hope that there may have been one idea or thought in this article that you will be able to use to your benefit as you face life situations that may be troubling. I hope that just maybe this will be a new passage that you may take in your life's journey. Keep in mind that passages are openings that lead to other places, other possibilities that at first may seem unfamiliar or even forbidding. By traveling through them, you begin to realize the promise of transition, of transformation, of new ways of seeing the world.

The question you have to ask yourself now is which are you going to feed - the Wolf or the Eagle?

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