



Develop emotional power

Bởi:

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*“It’s better to make a mistake with the full force of your being than to carefully avoid mistakes with a trembling spirit. Responsibility means recognizing both pleasure and price, making a choice on that recognition, and then living with that choice without concern.” Dan Millman: *Way of the Peaceful Warrior**

Did you read the book *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand (soon to be a movie)? It’s the amazing story of Louis Zamperini, Olympic athlete and World War II hero who survived two horrendous years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp - and through it all remained “unbroken.” There is a crucial lesson in the Zamperini story - and in all such stories of heroic survival: the hero never gave up emotionally. It would have been so easy for Aaron Ralston, whose story is recounted in his book (and movie) *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, to give up when his arm was pinned down by a boulder for five days – but had he ever thrown in the towel emotionally, he almost certainly would not have survived.

Zamperini and Ralston – and anyone else who has ever survived a difficult experience – emerged stronger than they went in. Here’s how Ben Horowitz, Cofounder and General Partner, Andreessen Horowitz venture capital firm (quoted in *Success* magazine, January 2013) put it: “Whenever I meet a successful CEO, I asked them how they did it. Mediocre CEOs point to their brilliant strategic moves or their intuitive business sense for a variety of other self-congratulatory explanations. The great CEOs tend to be remarkably consistent in their answers. They all say: ‘I didn’t quit.’”

Toughness is the third Cornerstone of Core Action Value #5, Perseverance, in our course on *The Twelve Core Action Values*. That doesn’t mean physical toughness nearly as much as it means mental toughness. Viktor Frankl, author of *Man’s Search for Meaning*, didn’t survive the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp because he was physically tough – it was because he was made of stern stuff emotionally.

Here are five things you can do to foster that sort of emotional strength that you will need when bad things happen to you (and, as Harold Kushner told us in his book of that title, bad things do happen to good people, often unexpectedly):

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Shout down fear: There is a scene in the PBS series on Ernest Shackleton where some of his men have given in to the fear that they would all die stranded on the Arctic ice. Shackleton, played by Kenneth Branagh, stands toe-to-toe with the ringleader of the negative thinkers and shouts “Nobody is going to die!” When you are in a tough situation and fear tries to take hold of your thinking, that is exactly what you must do: stand toe-to-toe with the emotion and shout out your determination to prevail. Take action, take risks: Over the past ten years, millions of people have lost jobs. The ones who are most likely to now be saying that “it was the best thing that ever could have happened” are those who used the experience as the jumping off point for doing something new – starting a business, changing careers, going back to school, writing a book (think J.K. Rowling).

Never be a victim: The prison camp guards did everything in their power to degrade and humiliate Zamperini, but the one thing they could never do was make him play the role of victim or martyr. Viktor Frankl said that the one quality that characterized survivors in the concentration camp was the determination to never give up that one and only freedom left to them – the freedom to define their own attitude.

Keep walking: The 23rd Psalm says that we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, not that we take up permanent residence down there in the darkness. One of the most important things for you to do when you are in those shadows is to keep walking. Keep moving physically by getting more exercise; keep moving intellectually by reading more and better books; keep moving emotionally by rewriting negative self-talk; keep moving spiritually by setting aside your own problems and reaching out to help others cope with theirs.

Pray for guidance: Some years back I read an article by a man who had recently retired from a long and successful career. He said that over the years he’d kept two journals – one labeled “Plan and Work” and the other labeled “Pray and Wait.” As he went back through them, he was surprised to see that his greatest, and most authentic and cherished, accomplishments had first been inscribed in the “Pray and Wait” journal. Soren Kierkegaard is widely quoted as having said that “The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.” It really doesn’t matter what your religion, or non-religion, happens to be: when your world is upside down, carrying on a conversation with a higher power, however you conceptualize such, can provide you with strength and emotional toughness. In his classic 1902 book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James wrote: “How can it possibly fail to steady the nerves, to cool the fever, and appease the fret, if one be sensibly conscious that no matter what one’s difficulties for the moment appear to be, one’s life as a whole is in the keeping of a power whom one can absolutely trust?”