Overcoming Adversity

Adversity is an unavoidable part of life. Death of a loved one, breakup of a relationship, malicious action by another, job loss, natural disaster, or any other undesirable event are all circumstances people encounter. Events happen that are beyond our control.

Successfully overcoming adversity is essential for a healthy life. Overcoming adversity builds mental strength, character and endurance. You develop in ways that would not otherwise be possible.

When undesirable incidents occur, you want to avoid the pitfall of the past and becoming mired in the would of, could of, or should of trap. It’s done and over. Adversity is overcome by moving forward.

Nothing you can do, say, think or feel will ever change the past. Wallowing in feelings of guilt, regret or despair will diminish the present and compromise the future. Although it’s difficult to accept unpleasant events, you have no choice, they have already occurred. The goal is to adjust your outlook to enable you to function and move ahead.

Adverse reactions are not unusual when faced with adversity. Feelings of denial, sickness, giving up, retribution, being overwhelmed, inactivity, anger, guilt, and "why me" are not uncommon. These reactions are counter-productive causing you to feel worse. Anger or bitterness poisons you and impedes your recovery.

You have control over your reaction to adversity. You have been conditioned by how others respond to unpleasant circumstances. However, most people aren’t a good role model for effectively dealing with adversity.

Adverse situations can be divided into three categories; events you have no control or influence over, situations resulting from decisions you made, and circumstances caused by someone else’s actions. Effort spent on lamenting the past drains you of energy needed to handle the present and plan for the future. Your energy is best spent ensuring that you will be OK.

After experiencing a loss, a period of grieving is normal but should not become a way of life. Everything in life is temporary. What varies is the timing. As much as you may miss someone, there are people who depend on and need you. Focusing on the needs of others is an effective and positive way to move forward.

Perhaps you are unhappy with the results from your decisions. Everyone makes bad calls. There are no "do-overs" -- life goes on. How do you get back on track? Learn from your experiences and keep going. Inaction will cause you to feel worse.

Channeling your energy into positive action is one of the best cures for being disheartened. For example, if you’ve lost a job, immediately begin the process of getting another one. No matter how bad unemployment is, the odds are always weighted heavily in your favor. Even if the unemployment rate was an astronomical 15%, you have an 85% chance of finding a job.
If a relationship has ended without any chance of reconciliation, take comfort in the fact that there are numerous people in the same boat. Get out, circulate, and meet people.

If you’ve made a bad decision and are unhappy with your circumstances, resolve to change direction. Effecting a correction can be difficult, but persisting in an unhappy state is torture.

Everyone encounters adversity. No one is ever singled out. No one knows why some things happen, they just do. Some decide to regain their footing, catch their breath and keep walking forward. Others choose to give up.

Each time you overcome adversity you get stronger and wiser and can teach others by example how to do it also.