



Adversity – A Key Ingredient in Self-Esteem and Success

A recent survey at a prestigious business school studied 400 executives who had made it to the top of their profession and compared them with 400 who didn't fare as well. The purpose of the study was to find out how those executives who succeeded differed from those who didn't.

The study discovered that education was not the key factor because high-school dropouts were running companies, while some MBAs were running into dead ends. The people at the top should have been older, and that wasn't the case.

Technical skills and many other career related criteria were examined. Those criteria didn't explain why.

What is the one quality the study discovered that distinguished these people who made it from those who didn't? One word—perseverance.

Every person faces adversity in their lives—personal, professional and health related adversity. How you understand and meet it, what you make of it and what you permit it to take from you—your dignity and self-respect

and confidence, and give to you are determined by your mental habits, your mental strength and your faith.

“Perseverance is a great element of success. If you knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you are sure to wake somebody.”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *poet*

You can train your mind to face life's toughest challenges. It's a vital and important personal quality trait to develop before you actually have to use it.

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“I didn't think I could survive my dad's death, but I did”

by Suzy Thomas

June 21, 1996 Page, AZ— My dad, Jim Carruth, was flying his Midget Mustang enroute to Sedona but never made it. The phone call we all dread when being a member of an aviation family—“dad has been in a plane crash...and he didn't survive.” What a surreal moment. Shock and disbelief are two words that come to mind.

The next few days were a blur. Having to get on a plane and fly from Phoenix to Salt Lake City was almost more than I could bear. Seeing my mom so distraught when the last time I saw her was 3 weeks earlier at her retirement party and she and my dad were looking forward to their “golden years”.

Food, planters, flowers, friends and phone calls awaited me when I walked into my childhood home. I went straight to my dad's room, fell on the bed and wrapped myself in his clothes and cried

uncontrollably. I could still smell him.

There is so much to do to plan an unexpected funeral. Write an obituary, contact a mortuary, order flowers, buy a burial plot and of course we needed funeral clothes. My mom said “Your dad would want us to have new outfits!” My mom, sister and me went to Nordstrom and at times forgot why we were there.

We were so caught up in the fun of shopping when my sister's cell phone rang and jerked us out of our reality. It was my brother-in-law. He had arrived in Salt Lake from Phoenix with my dad's body.



Photo of dad's plane from Sedona Airport Restaurant

The viewing (my dad had been burned in the crash and would be cremated and I didn't know you could rent-a-casket) was packed with so many people. It was such a good feeling to have friends and family

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WINGS

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Assisting those affected
by aircraft accidents

Wings of Light is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting those touched by aircraft accidents. The most important goal of the organization is to bring people together through the existence of three support networks.

Survivor Support Network

The *Wings of Light* Survivor Support Network is a support group for those who have been involved in and lived through an aircraft accident. This group helps individuals understand the feelings and issues of surviving the accident and coping with the impact on their lives.

Family and Friends Support Network

The *Wings of Light* Family and Friends Support Network provides families and individuals with specialized support that addresses the unique issues surrounding aircraft fatalities.

Rescue/Response Personnel Support Network

The *Wings of Light* Rescue/Response Personnel Support Network brings together individuals involved in the rescue, recovery and investigative efforts. An often overlooked group, individuals in this network are given a forum for peer counseling and voicing concerns.

Other activities include the development of local chapters, distributions of informational materials and resource kit, and referral to qualified counseling professionals.

Wings of Light, Inc. is a 501c3 public charity. Contributions are tax-deductible. If you are interested in more information or would like to make a contribution, contact *Wings of Light Inc.*, P.O. Box 1097, Sun City, AZ 85372, or visit www.wingsoflight.org

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For example, athletics can teach you a lot about overcoming adversity, perseverance, believing in yourself and never giving in or giving up, regardless of the score. These lessons transcend life and living and can help you deal with and overcome adversity in the game of life. As I have shared with many of my audiences over the years, the will to survive is based on your will to win. Without the will to win, you probably give up, give in and not survive. When literally fighting for your life, winning is everything!

“I have discovered in life that there are ways of getting almost anywhere you want to go—if you really want to go.”

Langston Hughes, *writer*

All adversity is not negative; it can also be a positive challenge. Although it never feels like it when you are facing it, adversity and how we respond to it defines who we are.

When things are going well, all the world is fine and in tune with us, it's easy to have a positive attitude and a strong work ethic. The bigger and more relevant question is: How do you measure up—stand up—when things aren't going so well?

Many people I know and who are my friends have suffered great physical, emotional and personal loss. Several of them I was hospitalized with in the burn unit, Brooke Army Hospital, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. They were burned, broken, scarred and unable to stand, walk, see or feed themselves. Another good friend lost his wife recently to cancer. She was 32 and they have five children ages 15 months to nine years old. The perseverance, character, passion and never give up, never give in mindset they have and demonstrated was and remains a source of inspiration to me and many of their friends. They suffered a gut-punch and were knocked down but they were determined not to stay down. They are survivors, not victims in thought, word and deed.

“Little minds...are subdued by misfortune...Great minds rise above them.”

Washington Irving, *writer*

Like them, you can learn to push through whatever adversity comes your way. How bad do you want to? If you choose to not push through the adversity and not see it as another of life's lessons, you will be poorly prepared for winning. If you can't or choose not to win, you won't survive. Successful people are successful because they face adversity head-on and that gains them more strength, skill and will. Then when faced with more adversity, they know what it takes to overcome it—they have a mental and spiritual benchmark. They choose to not take the path of least resistance—that also builds self-esteem.

President Abraham Lincoln said, “My greatest concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure.”

Few people failed early in their life as much as Lincoln, yet he is regarded as one of our country's greatest presidents. When you get discouraged, when you seem unable to make it, there are two things you cannot do without. They are the priceless and hard to define ingredients of success called effort and faith. Success and true peace of mind can't be achieved without experiencing adversity. It brings us closer to our belief in a higher, spiritual power and a deeper understanding and appreciation of ourselves. As a result, you become the ‘little engine that could.’

“You've got to say, “I think if I keep working at this and want it badly enough, I can have it.”

Lee Iacocca, *automobile executive*

An Asian proverb suggests, “When fate throws a dagger at you, there are only two ways to catch it, either by the blade or by the handle.”

The only way to know how to catch the dagger is to have it thrown at you many times. Then you either catch it or you

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don't. What did you learn about yourself from learning how to catch it? What did you learn when you didn't?

In my first book, *The Bridge Never Crossed — A Survivor's Search for Meaning* I relate the following story (pages 159–160) of a farmer several centuries ago who lost his prize horse.

“Centuries ago, a farmer began his early morning chores only to discover that his prize horse had run away through a broken fence. A neighbor later said to him, ‘It’s too bad your prize horse ran away.’ The farmer replied, ‘Too bad? How do I know the loss of the horse is a bad experience?’

Several days later, the prize horse returned—but not alone. With the horse were nearly a dozen of the finest wild horses that roamed the plains. Seeing the return of the prize horse along with the other horses, the neighbor came over and said to the farmer, ‘What good

fortune you have experienced!’ The farmer again replied, ‘Goods fortune? How do I know that having all these horses is good fortune?’

The farmer’s young, adult son, obviously pleased with the new horses, selected one for his own. On his first attempt to ride bare back, the young man was bucked off and broke his leg. Learning of the situation, the neighbor came over and said to the farmer, ‘What a terrible experience to have happened to your son.’ The farmer replied, ‘Terrible experience? How do I know that the breaking of my son’s leg is a terrible experience?’

A week later, a vicious warlord came storming through the countryside, conscripting every able-bodied young man to fight in his bloody battles. The farmer’s son was passed over. And so it goes.”

“Do you know the difference between education and experience?”

Education is when you read the fine print; experience is when you don't.”

Pete Seeger, folk singer

We never know when something interpreted as adversity can, over time turn into something positive. We all receive gifts only they’re not always wrapped in a box with a pretty bow. It is up to us to accept these gifts as wake-up calls and continue to look for the learning in every situation.

Looking for the learning from our experiences enables us to catch adversity by the handle and use it as the tool that it was intended to be. “I have not failed,” Thomas Edison said. “I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”

“Adversity either makes you better or bitter.”

George Burk, burn survivor

George Burk, Capt. USAF (Ret)

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Motivational speaker, author & writer.

“I didn’t think I could survive my dad’s death, but I did”

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there to support us. His flying buddies spoke from the heart at the service. There were a lot tears, sadness and fond memories.

The burial was on a beautiful summer day—great for flying! His friends flew a missing man formation while TAPS played in the background. A huge yellow butterfly landed on one of the floral arrangements and out of nowhere a deer pranced thru the cemetery. WOW—what a great “sign” that dad was ok.

I have a box from the crash—all of his personal belongings from the plane. From toothpaste to shorts, his life was now in a box. I used to get into it and immerse myself in gut-wrenching grief. It took me awhile to finally put the box up on a shelf so it



Dad's prop from his Midget Mustang hangs in my house

wasn't easily accessible. I moved recently and there it was sitting on the shelf almost as if it wanted to be opened again. And I did. And it was sad. And I closed it. And I'm fine. I also have the prop from the plane and it hangs in my house.

Here I am almost 15 years later and I DID survive his death. The first two years were unbearable. I cried every day and was inconsolable. It's such a process to go through and the old saying is true “one day at a time”. I have to give so much thanks to my mom for getting us through this. She was such an inspiration to me and showed me that you can move forward with your life and live a full life. I think of him often and when I see an airplane fly over I smile and say hi. Just last week I was able to finally listen to his favorite song El Paso by Marty Robbins.

When it would come up on my IPOD, I would change it because I didn't want to remember and go to that place of sadness. I enjoyed the song all the way to the end and it made me feel so happy.

Wings of Light Survey

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6. Have you volunteered to serve on one of the Support Networks?

_____ yes _____ no

If yes, which one(s)? (please check all that apply)

_____ Survivor Support Network

_____ Family and Friends Support Network

_____ Rescue/Response Support Network

7. If you are a volunteer on a Support Network, have you been contacted by anyone else from one of the *Wings of Light* Support Networks?

_____ yes _____ no

8. If you are a volunteer on a Support Network, have you contacted anyone else on a *Wings of Light* Support Network?

_____ yes _____ no

If yes, was it helpful? _____ yes _____ no

9. Have you visited the *Wings of Light* website?

www.wingsoflight.org

_____ yes _____ no

10. What additions would you like to see on the website?

11. Should a blog or discussion forum on the website be restricted to only *Wings of Light* Support Network volunteers, or be open to the public?

_____ restricted _____ open to public

12. What other services would you like to receive from *Wings of Light*?

Other comments:

Your feedback is very important to us. We appreciate you taking the time to respond.

Thank you!

Please mail your completed survey to:
Wings of Light Inc.
P.O. Box 1097
Sun City, AZ 85372

Wings of Light Survey

Wings of Light has been providing peer support services and assistance to individuals for more than 15 years. In order to continue to meet the needs of those affected by aircraft accidents, we would like you to give us some feedback to help us improve our services to those in need. Thank you!

1. Have you contacted *Wings of Light*?
____ yes ____ no
If yes, through what method?
____ phone ____ email/website
____ letter ____ other

Were you satisfied with the response?
____ yes ____ no
If no, why not? _____

2. Which services have you requested from *Wings of Light*?
(please check all that apply)
____ Referral to others who have suffered a loss
____ Referral to a local counselor
____ Liaison to the FAA / NTSB
____ Assistance with interpreting accident reports
____ Other, _____

4. If you were referred to other victims/families, did you contact the referral(s)?
____ yes ____ no
If no, why not? _____

If yes, was the contact helpful? ____ yes ____ no
If not helpful, why not? _____

3. Which of the following services have you received?
(please check all that apply)
____ Referral to others who have suffered a loss
____ Referral to a local counselor
____ Liaison to the FAA / NTSB
____ Assistance with interpreting accident reports
____ Other, _____

5. If you were given the name of a local counselor, did you contact the counselor?
If yes, was the counselor helpful? ____ yes ____ no
If not, what would have been more helpful? _____

(survey continued on page 4)

Detach form here and return to: *Wings of Light Inc.*, P.O. Box 1097, Sun City, AZ 85372

WINGS of LIGHT Contribution Form

Yes! Please accept my contribution of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$150 \$200 \$500 \$ _____

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Please make my contribution in memory of:

Please notify the following of my gift:

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