**Motivational Minutes on Adversity from 2015**

**(Also see Attitude and Character files.)**

1. **Cycles of Life**

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**Quote of the day:**

“When you get into a tight place, and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hold on a moment longer, never give up then—for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.” — Harriet Beecher Stowe

**Reflection:**

There are cycles in life, times in which everything seems to go well, and times when things seem to go badly.

When you are faced with a new obstacle or problem, don't let it discourage you and don't worry that you won't be able to overcome it. You must pass through this low phase of the cycle in the process. Problems cause you to stretch yourself as you rise up to meet them, and that brings the next phase of the cycle: You fight and you win and you make progress. It's like a wheel as it turns. As the top goes down, the bottom comes around to the top and the wheel carries you forward.

So don't look at the low points in your life as defeats, but as opportunities to make forward progress. I know it's often difficult to go through these cycles, but you must in order to keep moving forward, so keep at it!

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1. **Are You Still Wriggling**

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**Quote of the day:**

“When we long for life without difficulties, remind us that oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure.” — Peter Marshall

**Reflection:**

It seems like all valuable things have to go through a refining process –diamonds under great pressure and gold and silver in the fire.

*In medieval times, the goldsmiths had a unique method to determine when the refining fire had purged away all extraneous matter from the precious metal. When a goldsmith puts gold into the crucible and the fire begins to work on the dross, it begins to wriggle and wriggle, and as the dross is burned out it gets quieter. The goldsmith would stand patiently and peer intently into the seething, molten mass, meantime making the fire hotter and hotter. At last, a smile of satisfaction would lighten up the perspiring face of the goldsmith. He could see his face reflected in the molten mass of gold. Seeing his face mirrored there, he knew that the refining fire had wrought its purifying purpose*.

Remembering this story always encourages me when I'm going through the fires of difficulty. I think to myself while in the midst of trouble that I'm still wriggling and that I just need to hold on before I can come out like pure gold. Like the quote implies, difficulties are good for us. What difficulty in your life do you need to look at in a new light?

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1. **A Kick In The Teeth**

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**Quote of the day:**

“All the adversity I’ve had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles have strengthened me… You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you.” — Walt Disney

**Reflection:**

When you hit bottom, when dreams give way to disappointment, when all you've worked so hard for goes to pieces, when life no longer holds any purpose or promise, you are tempted to despair.

That's when you must remember that you were created for a purpose, and that purpose isn't a single, one-time thing; it's multifaceted and complex. As long as you live, there will be something more you can accomplish and there is always more to get out of life.

The end of one dream doesn't mean the end of all dreams. Just as the seasons come and go in their cycle, periods of success or setback, fulfillment or disappointment, and emotional highs and lows come and go. You may be in the depths of despair now, but it won't last forever. The best may be just around the corner, a new season of fruitfulness and fulfillment, but you'll never know if you stop where you are.

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1. **Fear Defeated**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“Do the thing you fear to do and keep on doing it... that is the quickest and surest way ever yet discovered to conquer fear.” — Dale Carnegie

**Reflection:**

I read that during World War II the Navy made sure that all of its new recruits either knew how to swim or learned how. The idea being, of course, that the ability to swim might someday save the sailor’s life at sea. Non-swimming recruits were put into swimming classes. The greatest challenge to this program was the fear some of these young men experienced. One of the exercises required the new sailor to jump—not dive—from a board 6 feet in the air into 8 or more feet of water while a half-dozen expert swimmers stood by. The fear those young men displayed was *real*. Yet all that stood between them and the defeat of that fear was one drop into the water below. To overcome this fear they were “accidentally” pushed off the board, the result: Fear defeated.

This story illustrates the point: Action cures fear. Indecision, postponement, on the other hand, foments fear.

When we face tough problems, they stay mired in our mind until we take action. Put the action principle to work. Next time you experience fear, big or little, steady yourself. Then search for an answer to this question: What kind of action can I take to conquer this fear? Isolate your fear. Then take appropriate action.

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1. **The Caterpillar and the Butterfly**



**Quote of the day:**

“What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the Master calls a butterfly.” – Richard Bach

**Consider:**

When confronted by a seemingly insurmountable challenge, my thoughts often turn to the example of the caterpillar and the butterfly. The caterpillar faces a tremendous struggle to emerge from the cocoon, but it must make this effort in order to survive. It is the same with life. If we avoid the struggles, we may be doing ourselves more harm than good. We may never give birth to our true self.

If the butterfly is helped out of the cocoon, it will not acquire enough strength to fly. Perhaps we, too, need a struggle in order to spread our wings and be transformed.

The next time life presents you with something that requires a great effort on your part, embrace the challenge and stand back and watch a beautiful butterfly emerge.

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1. **Successful Failures**

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**Quote of the day:**

“A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.” —George Bernard Shaw

**Reflection:**

To improve your self confidence, learn from successful failures.

*Ty Cobb was thrown out more times trying to steal bases than any other player in baseball history. Babe Ruth struck out more times than anyone also in baseball history. And Hank Aaron, who broke Ruth's home-run and strikeout records, struck out more often than 99 percent of the players who make it to the majors. Nobody-but nobody-considers them failures. Few people even remember their failures and virtually everyone remembers their successes. Enrico Caruso's voice failed to carry the high notes so many times his voice teacher advised him to quit. Caruso kept singing and was recognized as the greatest tenor of his day. Thomas Edison's teacher called him a dunce, and he did fail over 14,000 times in his efforts to perfect the incandescent light. Abraham Lincoln was well known for his lack of success, but nobody considers him a failure. Albert Einstein and Werner von Braun both flunked courses in math. Henry Ford was broke at age 40. Vince Lombardi became the most revered football coach since Knute Rockne, but at age 43 he was only a line coach at Fordham University.*

Don’t be afraid of failure. Step out and try.

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1. **The Dog and the Moon**

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**Quote of the day:**

“When men speak ill of thee, live so as nobody may believe them.” — Plato

**Reflection:**

I read the following great story about criticism and how to deal with it. I hope it’s helpful to you.

*Once there was a man who did the best job he could. But being human, he made mistakes and was criticized. Reporters wrote about his errors in the newspaper. Well, he became so upset that he drove out into the country to visit his dear friend, a farmer. “What am I going to do?" the man asked. "I've tried so hard. Nobody has tried harder than I have to do more good for more people, and look how they criticize me!" But the old farmer could hardly hear the complaint of his persecuted friend because his hound dog was barking up a storm at the full moon. The farmer rebuked his dog, but the dog kept barking. Finally, the farmer said to the friend, "Do you want to know how you should handle your unfair critics? Here's how. Listen to that dog; now, look up at the moon. And remember that people will keep yelling at you. They'll nip at your heels, and they'll criticize you. But here's the lesson: The dog keeps howling, but the moon keeps shining!"*

Is someone criticizing you unjustly? Just keep shining or as the quote says, live in such a way as nobody will believe them.

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1. **Take a Close Look at Your Mistakes and Failures**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Men succeed when they realize that their failures are the preparation for their victories.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Reflection:**

In 1856, 18-year-old chemist William Perkin turned out to be quite the young prodigy, inventing synthetic dye and going on to help fight cancer. Only, dye was nowhere close to what he intended on making. Here’s his story.

*Perkin was working on creating an artificial version of the malaria drug quinine. Instead, his experiments produced a dark oily sludge. Not only did the sludge turn silk a striking shade of light purple, it didn't wash out and was more vibrant and brighter than the existing dyes on the market. Up to that point, dyes were made mostly of insects, mollusks, or plant material. As later chronicled in the book* Mauve: How One Man Invented a Color That Changed the World, *by Simon Garfield, Perkin's invention of mauve coloring became the hit of the Paris and London fashion scenes; Queen Victoria even wore it to her daughter's wedding in 1858.*

This story just goes to show that good can come out of seeming failure. Be sure to take a close look at your mistakes and failures and see if something better has not emerged.

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1. **Creating a Gem Out of You**

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**Quote of the day:**

“A diamond is just a piece of charcoal that handled stress exceptionally well” – Author unknown

**Consider:**

Many people pay close attention to TV commercials instructing them how to avoid pain. Pain, however, is the great unwanted therapist. Pain both emotional and physical can nag us and prod us to do something different. Don't fear your pain, but see it as a catalyst, a stepping stone to healing.

Remember under pressure charcoal becomes a diamond. Use your pain and the gifts it brings to change things and create a gem out of you.

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1. **Seven “No” Equals a Yes**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Life is a series of sales situations, and the answer is NO if you don’t ask.” — Patricia Fripp

**Reflection:**

Rejection or getting a “no” for an answer is sometimes very hard on people. It certainly has been for me in times past. Recently, I came across the “one in seven” concept in three different places which I want to share it with you here. It helped me to look at rejection in a more positive light as the fellow in the following story does.

*The sales trainer told me that to make a sale I had to collect seven “no-sales” first. In other words, I could look forward to making one sale for every seven times I was turned down. I got so excited about this guaranteed sale that I actually looked forward with great excitement to being turned down! I almost cheered every time someone said "no," and I would rush, laughing to the next door on the street, in order to get the next "no" out of the way just as fast as I could, because I knew in my bones that every "no" was putting me that much closer to a great big sweet old "YES!" Did I get discouraged when the eighth door and the ninth door yielded yet two more "no's"? OF COURSE NOT!! Those eighth and ninth "no's" were like money in the bank! Soon after FOURTEEN "no"s there would be TWO great big sweet old "YES'S"!! And if I racked up TWENTY-ONE "no's," I knew I had THREE "yes's" coming! Every "no" was good news!! I know if I call on enough people there will always be a YES waiting for me—and I'll come to it in good time. So getting a "no" is good news!*

Are you letting the fear of rejection stop you from getting the seven no’s you need to get a yes?

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1. **Success From Failure**

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**115 Quote of the day:**

“Develop success from failures. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest stepping stones to success.” — Dale Carnegie

**Consider:**

Some of the most popular products we use today were accidents stumbled on by clumsy scientists, chefs who spilled things, and misguided inventors. We can all take comfort in knowing even some huge mistakes can come with silver linings, sometimes big enough to change entire industries.

*Industrial equipment stabilizer was the intended use of the springs naval engineer Richard James was developing in 1943. The sensitive springs were meant to keep fragile equipment steady on ships. Then James knocked one of his new springs from a shelf and, like a kid on Christmas morning, watched it do that famous Slinky walk down instead of just hitting the ground. He took the creation home to show his wife, Betty, who saw the potential for a new toy. After consulting the dictionary, a name sprung to mind:* Slinky, *a Swedish term meaning "sleek and sinuous." By time the toy was demonstrated in front of Gimbels Department Store in Philadelphia, during the 1945 Christmas season, it was clear it would be a best toy seller.*

James turned his seeming failure into success. What failure do you need to take a closer look at and see if you might be missing out on success?

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1. **Unresolved Grief**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak knits up the over wrought heart and bids it break.” ― William Shakespeare

**Reflection:**

I’ve noticed in my research that unresolved grief can be a great hindrance to our happiness and stunt our growth as well as prevent us from moving on and living a meaningful life. We all have experienced grief in one form or another, to some degree whether it be a loss of a loved one, a job, a pet, health, belongings, a public tragedy, a divorce, or any other sort of loss. It is important no matter what form grief comes into your life that you process it. If you let it build up too much it’s not healthy for you physically, mentally or spiritually.

We all grieve differently but no matter how you grieve you have to allow yourself to do so, to feel the loss and then to release it, be healed and start living again. This may mean a measure of forgiveness both of yourself and/or others as well as other uncomfortable things necessary to recovery. Depending on how much grief you have you may need to receive help from a professional grief counselor either in person or through books. Whatever you decide it is important to not hang on to grief too long so it doesn’t hold you back from completing your journey and mission.

Are there losses in your life that are holding you back that you need to deal with?