

My Healing

As I looked over my life, appreciating the person I am and the gifts that I have, something occurred to me. I don't give full credit where credit is due. Yes, I give thanks for the pleasurable, comforting and rewarding experiences of my life. But I forget that I owe much of my thanks to something totally different—life's struggles.

Within moments, I asked and answered one of my biggest life questions, "Why do we suffer?"

I am the person who I am today, not because I had a perfect childhood or the most supportive friends, but because that wasn't always so. I am the person who I am today, not because I've always trusted the right people and made the right decisions, but because I sometimes screwed up.

Life's Struggles Teach Life Lessons

Most of what I've come to appreciate about myself did not develop because life has always been good to me. It's quite the opposite.

For me, as for everyone, life has been a complex mix of experiences. Some days have been like a walk in the park, while other days felt like an uphill run on a rocky road. But every bit of this has helped to define the person I am.

If you've ever wondered why we must endure life's struggles, consider this: Our struggles, and the way we deal with them, are among the many gifts that shape our lives. If we can find it in our hearts to replace resentment, frustration, and anger with appreciation for life's struggles, we can heal emotional scars and reach the epitome of **self improvement success**.

Life's Struggles Build Character

“You desire to know the art of living, my friend? It is contained in one phrase: make use of suffering.” -Henri-Frederic

Strength & Resilience

My inner strength was not developed through picking flowers and partying every day. Instead, I am the strong, resilient woman that I am because I've chosen to get back up repeatedly after being knocked down.

Each time I suffered a little, I gained a little more strength. When I suffered greatly, I gained even greater resistance to weakness and realized that I set my own limitations.

Integrity

Integrity didn't become one of my strongest character traits because I've only been exposed to honest, fair and noble people. I learned the importance of this characteristic by being hurt by those who lacked it.

Intellect

My intellect didn't come from sleeping until noon everyday and partying with friends all night. I read books instead of entertainment magazines, studied until dawn, showed up for class when I was exhausted, listened to people whose ideas were painfully different than my own, and refused to give up my quest for knowledge.

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I am indeed a compassionate woman whose heart overflows with love and concern for ALL people. But I haven't always been tolerant of those much different than myself. I learned the hard way what it's like to be discriminated against and treated like you don't matter.

Because of my own life's struggles, I learned that **everyone deserves compassion.**

Courage

I didn't gain courage by always being safe. I found myself in multiple situations that scared and worried me. It was a struggle at the time, but surviving those situations was the proof that I needed to realize I'm a survivor. My courage and confidence exist because I've slept alone in the dark, I've swam without a life jacket, I've stood up to the boss, I've faced the monsters head-on.

Resourcefulness & Creativity

I am not resourceful because everything and everyone have always been there for me. Instead, I learned resourcefulness because of what was NOT there. Thanks to life's struggles, thanks to the experience of lack, I learned to create or workaround what isn't laid at my feet.

Self Esteem

I have healthy self esteem today, but it's not because everyone always praised me. I learned to love me by painfully watching my own daughter second guess her value and self-worth. Her struggle was my struggle. And it was the push that I needed to deal with my issues, separate how I see myself from how others see me, and set a positive example for the young woman I'm raising.

I would NOT trade strength, compassion, self esteem, integrity, courage and intellect for an effortless life. So, as I embrace these characteristics as a part of me, I recognize the benefit in the struggles that brought me to this point. So what about you?

No matter who you are, there is something wonderful about you. You

have something that is of great value to family, friends, strangers, and the Universe as a whole. So, here is the challenge: As you appreciate everything you have to be thankful for, don't forget about your struggles. Life's struggles need not be something that you loathe, regret and avoid. They have value. And that value trickles down to create the whole of you and me.

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” -Albert Einstein