

8 Things to Remember When Everything Goes Wrong

“The best way out is always through.”

—Robert Frost

“Today, I’m sitting in my hospital bed waiting to have both my breasts removed. But in a strange way I feel like the lucky one. Up until now I have had no health problems. I’m a 69-year-old woman in the last room at the end of the hall before the pediatric division of the hospital begins. Over the past few hours I have watched dozens of cancer patients being wheeled by in wheelchairs and rolling beds. None of these patients could be a day older than 17.”

That’s an entry from [my grandmother’s journal](#), dated 9/16/1977. I photocopied it and pinned it to my bulletin board about a decade ago. It’s still there today, and it continues to remind me that there is always, always, always something to be thankful for. And that no matter how good or bad I have it, I must wake up each day thankful for my life, because someone somewhere else is desperately fighting for theirs.

Truth be told, happiness is not the absence of problems, but the ability to deal with them. Imagine all the wondrous things your mind might embrace if it weren’t wrapped so tightly around your struggles. Always look at what you have, instead of what you have lost. Because it’s not what the world takes away from you that counts; it’s what you do with what you have left.

Here are a few reminders to help motivate you when you need it most:

1. Pain is part of growing.

Sometimes life closes doors because it’s time to move forward. And that’s a good thing because we often won’t move unless circumstances force us to. When times are tough, remind yourself that no pain comes without a purpose. Move on from what hurt you, but never forget what it taught you. Just because you’re struggling doesn’t mean you’re failing. Every great success requires some type of worthy struggle to get there. Good things take time. Stay patient and stay positive. Everything is going to come together; maybe not immediately, but eventually. Remember that there are two kinds of pain: pain that hurts and pain that changes you. When you roll with life, instead of resisting it, both kinds help you grow.

2. Everything in life is temporary.

Every time it rains, it stops raining. Every time you get hurt, you heal. After darkness there is always light – you are reminded of this every morning, but still you often forget, and instead choose to believe that the night will last forever. It won’t. Nothing lasts forever.

So if things are good right now, enjoy it. It won’t last forever. If things are bad, don’t worry because it won’t last forever either. Just because life isn’t easy at the moment, doesn’t mean you can’t laugh. Just because something is bothering you, doesn’t mean you can’t smile. Every moment gives you a new beginning and a new ending. You get a second chance, every second. You just have to take it and make the best of it. (Read [The Last Lecture](#).)

3. Worrying and complaining changes nothing.

Those who complain the most, accomplish the least. It’s always better to attempt to do something great and fail than to attempt to do nothing and succeed. It’s not over if you’ve lost; it’s over when you do nothing but complain about it. If you believe in something, keep trying. Don’t let the

shadows of the past darken the doorstep of your future. Spending today complaining about yesterday won't make tomorrow any brighter. Take action instead. Let what you've learned improve how you live. Make a change and never look back.

And regardless of what happens in the long run, remember that true happiness begins to arrive only when you stop complaining about your problems and you start being grateful for all the problems you don't have.

4. Your scars are symbols of your strength.

Don't ever be ashamed of the scars life has left you with. A scar means the hurt is over and the wound is closed. It means you conquered the pain, learned a lesson, grew stronger, and moved forward. A scar is the tattoo of a triumph to be proud of. Don't allow your scars to hold you hostage. Don't allow them to make you [live your life in fear](#). You can't make the scars in your life disappear, but you can change the way you see them. You can start seeing your scars as a sign of strength and not pain.

Rumi once said, "The wound is the place where the Light enters you." Nothing could be closer to the truth. Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most powerful characters in this great world are seared with scars. See your scars as a sign of "YES! I MADE IT! I survived and I have my scars to prove it! And now I have a chance to grow even stronger."

5. Every little struggle is a step forward.

In life, patience is not about waiting; it's the ability to keep a good attitude while working hard on your dreams, knowing that the work is worth it. So if you're going to try, put in the time and go all the way. Otherwise, there's no point in starting. This could mean losing stability and comfort for a while, and maybe even your mind on occasion. It could mean not eating what, or sleeping where, you're used to, for weeks on end. It could mean stretching your comfort zone so thin it gives you a nonstop case of the chills. It could mean sacrificing relationships and all that's familiar. It could mean accepting ridicule from your peers. It could mean lots of time alone in solitude. Solitude, though, is the gift that makes great things possible. It gives you the space you need. Everything else is a test of your determination, of how much you really want it.

And if you want it, you'll do it, despite failure and rejection and the odds. And every step will feel better than anything else you can imagine. You will realize that the struggle is not found on the path, it is the path. And it's worth it. So if you're going to try, go all the way. There's no better feeling in the world... there's no better feeling than knowing what it means to be ALIVE. (*Angel and I discuss this in more detail in the "Goals and Success" chapter of [1,000 Little Things Happy, Successful People Do Differently](#).*)

6. Other people's negativity is not your problem.

Be positive when negativity surrounds you. Smile when others try to bring you down. It's an easy way to maintain your enthusiasm and focus. When other people treat you poorly, keep being you. Don't ever let someone else's bitterness change the person you are. You can't take things too personally, even if it seems personal. Rarely do people do things because of you. They do things because of them.

Above all, don't ever change just to impress someone who says you're not good enough. Change because it makes you a better person and leads you to a brighter future. People are going to talk regardless of what you do or how well you do it. So worry about yourself before you worry about what others think. If you believe strongly in something, don't be afraid to fight for it. Great strength comes from overcoming what others think is impossible.

All jokes aside, your life only comes around once. This is IT. So do what makes you happy and be with whoever makes you smile, often.

7. What's meant to be will eventually, BE.

True strength comes when you have so much to cry and complain about, but you prefer to smile and appreciate your life instead. There are blessings hidden in every struggle you face, but you have to be willing to open your heart and mind to see them. You can't force things to happen. You can only drive yourself crazy trying. At some point you have to let go and let what's meant to be, BE.

In the end, loving your life is about trusting your intuition, taking chances, losing and finding happiness, cherishing the memories, and learning through experience. It's a long-term journey. You have to stop worrying, wondering, and doubting every step of the way. Laugh at the confusion, live consciously in the moment, and enjoy your life as it unfolds. You might not end up exactly where you intended to go, but you will eventually arrive precisely where you need to be. (Read [A New Earth](#) .)

8. The best thing you can do is to keep going.

Don't be afraid to get back up – to try again, to love again, to live again, and to dream again. Don't let a hard lesson harden your heart. Life's best lessons are often learned at the worst times and from the worst mistakes. There will be times when it seems like everything that could possibly go wrong is going wrong. And you might feel like you will be stuck in this rut forever, but you won't. When you feel like quitting, remember that sometimes things have to go very wrong before they can be right. Sometimes you have to go through the worst, to arrive at your best.

Yes, life is tough, but you are tougher. Find the strength to laugh every day. Find the courage to feel different, yet beautiful. Find it in your heart to make others smile too. Don't stress over things you can't change. Live simply. Love generously. Speak truthfully. Work diligently. And even if you fall short, keep going. Keep growing.

Awake every morning and do your best to follow this daily TO-DO list:

1. Think positively.
2. Eat healthy.
3. Exercise today.
4. Worry less.
5. Work hard.
6. Laugh often.
7. Sleep well.

Repeat...