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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

When You Think You've Lost Everything

Steps to rebuilding your life

My Year without Clothes

Parenting from the Heart

Thinking long-term

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Some years ago, I showed the old Disney movie *Old Yeller* to some of my young grandchildren.

Old Yeller is a 1957 American family tragedy film directed by Robert Stevenson. It is about a boy who adopts a stray dog in post-Civil War Texas. At the end of the movie, the heroic and loyal pet contracts rabies, and posing a danger, has to be put down by his grieving owner.

The grandkids didn't like the sad ending, of course, but talking about it afterwards presented a perfect teachable moment to point out that not everything in life has a happy ending.

Interestingly, while preparing this issue on the topic of overcoming adversity, I ran across this quote from the same movie:

"Life's like that sometimes... Now and then for no good reason a man can figure out, life will just haul off and knock him flat, slam him against the ground so hard it seems like all his insides is busted. But it's not all like that. A lot of it is mighty fine, and you can't afford to waste the good part frettin' about the bad. That makes it all bad..."

"Sure, I know—sayin' it's one thing and feelin' it's another. But I'll tell you a trick that's sometimes a big help. When you start lookin' around for something good to take the place of the bad, as a general rule you can find it."

We all face adversity of some sort at different times in life. Some troubles are more difficult to overcome than others are. Still, looking for the good in challenging circumstances can make a big difference. The articles in this issue of *Motivated* do just that. I hope they will help you discover the many things in your situation that are still "mighty fine" too.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*



Tiny Worlds

By Joyce Suttin, adapted

I remember learning about the word “microcosm” when I was in fifth grade. As homework, our teacher handed each of us a 36-inch string and told us to make a circle on the ground. Then we were to look at everything within the circle, study it, and see what lived in our tiny world.

From then on I was fascinated with little worlds. I spent hours sitting in the grass creating environments for ants and little bugs. I made chairs out of leaves and gowns out of petals. I made tiny roads and houses out of twigs. But mostly I just watched.

I took my string everywhere, and suddenly I saw the world with new eyes. Lawns, pebble-strewn pathways, rock ledges with carpets of moss—all I had to do was make a circle and I could create a new world. Well, not exactly “create,” but I could modify existing worlds and try to improve them.

Today I hear of tragedies in the news and weep over the headlines. I

listen to political debates and wonder if people will ever agree, or if they are so absorbed in their arguments that they’ll never see the things they have in common.

I wish I could change the world. I wish I could make it a cleaner, more beautiful place. I wish I could end war and violence. I wish goodwill really could fill the earth. I was pondering this as I took my morning walk. Then I remembered the little girl in fifth grade, and I realized that while I cannot change the entire world, I can make my little world a better place. I cannot change everyone’s heart, but I can influence the person walking beside me.

I can create a microcosm of peace in a world of tempests. I can make my home a haven of calm in the midst of storms. I can take steps to make my surroundings more beautiful. I may not have been given a huge world to change, but I can change my tiny world by finding ways to fill it with love each day. ◀◀



When You Think You've Lost Everything

Anonymous, adapted

Everything in this world is temporary. We're not made to live forever. We're only going to get 60, 80, or 100 years on this planet. This means we're going to experience major losses in life.—Losses of loved ones and relationships, and many other secondary losses. There are going to be storms of stress, torrents of tragedy, gales and gusts of grief, and floods of failure.

When these things happen, the typical, often unanswerable question we ask is “Why?” “Why is this happening to me? Why is this going on?” We may never get an answer to these questions on this side of eternity, but I've discovered from other people's experiences that we often don't need an explanation as much as encouragement.

Explanations don't encourage us. Therefore, it's far more helpful, instead of asking “Why?” to ask “What?” “What do I do now? What's next?”

Whether you've lost a loved one, your job, your financial security, or a dream,

your heart is broken. What do you do when it seems you've lost it all? How do you rebuild your life?

Steps to rebuilding your life

1. Release your grief.

Loss always creates very strong emotions in us. We grieve. We worry. We fear. We may be depressed. We may be angry.

Whatever we do with these emotions, we should not resist them, rehearse them, reduce them, and repress them. We should release them.

First, don't resist them. Resisting means we're not going to let ourselves feel. Many people do that when they go through a major loss. “I'm just not going to let myself feel anything. I don't want to let it get too close to me.” It is a major mistake to not allow ourselves to feel our feelings. Feelings are meant to be felt.

On the other hand, rehearsing our feelings, to where we repeatedly go over

our grief, is not productive either. It is better not to second-guess ourselves, “If I’d have done this differently maybe I’d still have my old life.” Or, “If I’d done this differently maybe my loved one would still be alive.” Rehearsing our grief is just as ineffective as resisting it.

Next, we should not reduce our feelings and tell ourselves, “It’s no big deal.” It was a big deal. It hurt and it still does. We should not minimize our feelings and say, “It doesn’t matter.” It did matter.

Last, we certainly don’t want to repress our feelings. Many people are stuffers. They push their feelings down, which is like taking a coke bottle and shaking it up. One day it’s going to explode.

2. Resist bitterness.

Bitterness is far worse than any problem we’ll ever experience. We may argue, “You don’t know what I’ve gone through!” “I’ve had a t tough life! “Life has dealt me an unfair hand!”

Still, bitterness is worse. Why? Because it’s holding on to the hurt. That’s what resentment does. The past is past. It can’t hurt us anymore. The only way it can hurt us is if we choose to hold on to it through bitterness. We need to let it go. We need to release our grudges just as we released our grief.

We can ask, “Do I want to be bitter, or better? Do I want to be bitter or do I want to be happy?” Happiness is a choice.

If we’re going to rebuild our life after a major loss, a breakup, or anything else, we’ve got to release our grief to God and resist bitterness, because bitterness will poison our life.

3. Accept what cannot be changed.

Much of life is totally beyond our control. Sometimes the only way to overcome some problems is to accept them. It’s just like our past. Our past is past. No matter how much we resent it we can’t change it. We’re just going to have to accept it. We can’t rewrite history and pretend our childhood was really a popular, fun, happy time when it wasn’t. We can’t gloss over the past and try to make it appear different than it really is.

It takes faith to face reality and not be discouraged by it. Having faith is not pretending like everything’s great when it’s not, but we believe that God is in control and that He cares and will help us.

4. Focus on what’s left, not on what’s lost.

After a loss, we should try to find something to be grateful for. There’s always something, like the air we breathe and other stuff we often take for granted.

Scientists have discovered that an attitude of gratitude is the healthiest emotion we can have. The more grateful and thankful we are, the more emotionally and physically healthy we will be. It’s like the old cliché, “I complained I had no shoes until I met a man who had no legs.” Find something to be grateful for, and focus on what’s left—not what’s lost.

If these steps are too difficult to take alone, a close friend, supportive family member, or professional counselor may be able to help. ❧❧



By Jessie Richards, adapted

My Year without Clothes

Well, not literally. I can explain. At the start of last year, I made (and ended up keeping) a resolution to not purchase any new clothes or shoes that year. My reasons were a combination of,

1) I didn't need more shoes and clothes. I'm not one of those shopaholic types, and with a combination of going to plenty of garage sales, occasional online shopping, and having lots of girlfriends around to swap with, I already had a lot of stuff!

2) I had recently read about a growing movement of people who had decided they would only own 100 items.* I did some quick calculations and decided that wasn't exactly for me, but I admired the concept. And

3) I had exactly zero set aside in savings at the time, and I wanted to change that.

As it turned out, I ended up getting more new clothes and shoes within that year than I had in the previous several years, despite not buying any of them. Yep, it's true. It was a combination of visits with my mother, sister, and sister-in-law—all of whom had a stash set aside for me—and gifts from other friends. Granted, not everything was brand new, but some was—and it was all new to me. So, the happy news is that I got variety in my wardrobe and shoe-drobe (shouldn't that be a word?) without having spent a penny on it.

I woke up this morning thinking about that decision and that year and how well it all went. I strongly suspect that it was somehow connected to the minor panic I've been experiencing over the last few days in thinking about my current financial situation. I've recently relocated, bringing about a lot of changes in my life, and I'm facing

some, shall we say, challenges. I have a lot of experience in being frugal, I'm disciplined in my budgeting and spending, and I think that with a little caution I'll be okay.

Anyway, I suppose my "year without clothes" came to mind because I needed to be reminded that, as I like to say, "Stuff works out." During that year, spending less time and money pursuing the acquisition of things didn't actually result in wanting for anything. If in the near or distant future there is a month, or even a year, when I have to do without buying a certain thing, can I think that it will come along in some unexpected

way? I think so.

Another thing I came to realize during my "year without clothes" was how much I had in many ways. For example, I had a job at a time when a lot of people didn't. I've never been homeless. And contrary to what you might have thought when reading the title of this article, I've never had to run around without clothes either! I've had things pretty good.

On the practical side, this experiment also kept me from having even more stuff than I do, which was good, because as it was, I had to trim down when I moved earlier this year.

All in all, I've felt richer since then. ❧

The 100 Thing Challenge (100TC)

<https://www.facebook.com/100thingchallenge>

The 100 Thing Challenge (100TC) is a simple living movement started by Dave Bruno and made awesome by many thousands of people just like you from all around the world.

100TC is about creating better relationships of all kinds through the formative power of simplicity.

How does 100TC work? That is a great question with multiple answers. Originally, the 100 Thing Challenge was a personal simple living project Dave did to break free from consumerism. He lived with 100 personal possessions for a year in order to form new habits of consumption. 100TC got some press. Dave wrote a book. And with the insight and participation of many likeminded people, including contributors to the blog, 100TC grew into what is now a thriving community.

100TC has additional expressions.

Many people have been inspired by 100TC and used that inspiration to do different kinds of simplicity projects. Instead of living with 100 personal possessions for a year, some people have gotten rid of 100 personal possessions in a month. Others have used 100TC as the catalyst to pay off their consumer debt. Many have simply used 100TC principles to trade a cluttered lifestyle for a peaceful life.

Those 100TC principles are:

1. Reduce. By reducing the number of our possessions for an extended period of time, we prove to ourselves that consumerism does not define us.

2. Refuse. By refusing to go along with the misleading lifestyle of consumerism, we form new priorities in line with personal values and what is best for the world around us.

3. Rejigger. By rejiggering our lives through simplicity, we nurture better relationships with God, family, community, and nature. ❧



Thinking *Long-term*

By Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis, adapted

It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings.—Anne Landers

When I became a mom, I got lots of advice on how to love my child. But not until a few years ago did someone actually point out that loving a child means wanting what's best for them long-term.

When my four daughters were young, long-term didn't resonate with me. Back then it was about survival, meeting daily needs and keeping my head above water.

Now that my kids are maturing,

however, the fog is lifting. I'm no longer surviving, but rather I am a thriving parent. The perk of this stage is that my kids want to spend time with me. We have real conversations that reveal their beautiful personalities. With everyone sleeping through the night, I'm sleeping better, too. I can think coherently and be more intentional in how I raise them.

These days, I put more thought into long-term. I think about the kind of adults that I hope my children will be and I work backward to ask, "What can I do today to foster that?" Being mindful of their future has changed my parenting paradigm, because what makes my children happy at age 10 or 15 is somewhat different from what will make them happy at age 25, 30, 40 and beyond.

A while back I came across some interesting articles and books that dig into what psychologists today are seeing: a rising number of 20-somethings who are depressed and don't know why. These young adults claim they had magical childhoods. Their parents are their best friends. They never experienced tragedy or anything more than normal disappointments. Yet for some reason, they're unhappy.

One reason given is that parents today are too quick to swoop in. We don't want our children to fall, so instead of letting them experience adversity, we clear the path. We remove obstacles to make their life easy. But adversity is a part of life, and only by facing it can our children build life-coping skills they'll need down the road. So while it seems like we're doing them a favor, we're really stunting their growth. We're

putting short-term payoffs over long-term well-being.

One article mentions incoming college freshmen who are known to deans as “teacups” for their fragility in the face of minor problems. The question posed was this: “Could it be that by protecting our kids from unhappiness as children, we’re depriving them of happiness as adults?”

Here’s psychiatrist Paul Bohn’s response, as paraphrased in the piece:

Many parents will do anything to avoid having their kids experience even mild discomfort, anxiety, or disappointment—“anything less than pleasant,” as he puts it—with the result that when, as adults, they experience the normal frustrations of life, they think something must be terribly wrong.

Why am I sharing this information? Because I think it’s relevant in this age of helicopter parenting. While I find it great that today’s parents are more invested in their children’s lives than previous generations, our involvement can go overboard. What we may justify as “good parenting” can hurt our children later. Unless we’re mindful of that, it’s easy to handicap them by making their lives too easy.

As my favorite parenting philosophy goes, “Prepare your child for the road, not the road for your child.” ❧❧

See it Through

By Edgar Albert Guest

*When you’re up against a trouble,
Meet it squarely, face to face;
Lift your chin and set your shoulders,
Plant your feet and take a brace.
When it’s vain to try to dodge it,
Do the best that you can do;
You may fail, but you may conquer,
See it through!*

*Black may be the clouds about you
And your future may seem grim,
But don’t let your nerve desert you;
Keep yourself in fighting trim.
If the worst is bound to happen,
Spite of all that you can do,
Running from it will not save you,
See it through!*

*Even hope may seem but futile,
When with troubles you’re beset,
But remember you are facing
Just what other men have met.
You may fail, but fall still fighting;
Don’t give up, whatever you do;
Eyes front, head high to the finish.
See it through! ❧❧*



The Water

Author Unknown

It was the hot, dry season. With no rain in almost a month, crops were dying, cows had stopped giving milk, streams had long dried up, and we, like other farmers in the area, faced bankruptcy if we didn't see some rain soon.

I was in the kitchen making lunch when I saw my six-year-old son, Billy, walking purposefully and carefully toward the woods. I could only see his back. Minutes after he disappeared, he came running back.

This activity—walk carefully to the woods, run back to the house—was repeated a few more times. Finally, I couldn't take it any longer, and I followed him on his journey, being careful to remain out of sight.

Branches and thorns slapped his face, but he didn't try to avoid them. Then I saw the most amazing sight. Several large deer loomed in front of him, but Billy walked right up to them. I almost screamed for him to get away—a huge buck with elaborate antlers was dangerously close. But the buck did not threaten him. He didn't even move as Billy knelt down. Then I saw a tiny fawn that was lying on the ground, obviously suffering from dehydration and heat exhaustion, lift its head with great effort to lap up the water my beautiful boy had brought, cupped in his hands.

When the water was gone, Billy jumped up to run back to the house and

the spigot that we had shut off the water to. Billy turned it all the way and knelt to catch the few drops that trickled out. He had gotten into trouble for playing with the hose the week before and received a lecture about the importance of not wasting water, and I understood why he hadn't asked for help.

The leftover water in the pipes was all but gone, and it took a long time for the drops to fill his makeshift "cup." When he finally stood up and turned around, I was in front of him.

His eyes filled with tears. "I'm not wasting," was all he said.

With a lump in my throat, I handed Billy a cup filled to the brim with water from the kitchen, and together we walked back into the tree line. I let him tend to the fawn, watching proudly as my son worked to save a life.

Tears rolled down my face and hit the ground, where they were joined by other drops ... and more drops ... and more. I looked up and saw the sky was dark. Billy and I barely made it back to the house before the clouds burst and a heavy rain shower hit.

Some will probably say that this was just a huge coincidence, that it was bound to rain sometime. And I can't argue with that. All I can say is that the rain that came that day saved our farm, just like the actions of a little boy saved the life of that fawn. ◀◀

A photograph of a single, large, gnarled tree with a dense canopy of green leaves, leaning slightly to the left. The tree stands in a vast, flat, green field under a sky filled with soft, grey clouds. The overall tone is somewhat somber and contemplative.

The *Blowing* Wind

By Zig Ziglar, adapted

Very few people ask for trouble. But maybe we should.

I received an interesting note once from a friend who visited the Biosphere Two, a man-made living habitat in Arizona.

During the tour, the guide explained that one oversight of the designers was their failure to create wind within the structure. No wind to blow the trees back and forth created a problem: The trees would grow to a certain height and then topple over from their own weight. Lack of wind resulted in the trees not having a deeply extended root system.

My friend explained that this thought made him realize that without the winds of adversity we cannot grow and become the people we are designed to be without toppling over. I agree. You

cannot raise champions on a feather bed. The percentage of people who overcome adversity to go to great heights is legendary.

From time to time when the weather doesn't suit us, all of us are inclined to say things like we wish we could make it rain or stop raining, the wind to blow more or less, that it would get cooler or warmer, etc. The biosphere clearly demonstrates to us that we are likely to "forget" some things, as the designers forgot to let the wind blow to give the trees those roots.

Remembering this can help us to be grateful that God is in control of the bigger picture, and while we might not understand everything that happens to us, we can trust that the winds of life will make us stronger. ◀◀

Overcoming *Adversity*

NOTABLE
QUOTES



If you break your neck, if you have nothing to eat, if your house is on fire—then you got a problem. Everything else is inconvenience. Life is inconvenient. Life is lumpy. Learn to separate the inconveniences from the real problems. You will live longer. —Sigmund Wollman

If you can find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere.
—Frank A. Clark

Adversity is like a strong wind. It tears away from us all but the things that cannot be torn, so that we see ourselves as we really are.—Arthur Golden

A bend in the road is not the end of the road... unless you fail to make the turn.—Author Unknown

The only thing that overcomes hard luck is hard work.—Harry Golden

Some luck lies in not getting what you thought you wanted but getting what you have, which once you have got it you may be smart enough to see is what you would have wanted had you known.
—Garrison Keillor

Who will tell whether one happy moment of love or the joy of breathing or walking on a bright morning and smelling the fresh air, is not worth all the suffering and effort that life implies.
—Erich Fromm

Count the garden by the flowers, never by the leaves that fall. Count your life with smiles and not the tears that roll.
—Author Unknown

Birds sing after a storm; why shouldn't people feel as free to delight in whatever remains to them? —Rose F. Kennedy

