

# **CONVERT OBSTACLES INTO OPPORTUNITIES**

By

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## **Introduction**

“PROBLEMS ARE GOLDMINES.....The world's biggest problems are also the world's biggest business opportunities.

– Peter Diamandis, Greek-American engineer, physician, and entrepreneur

Think life, think problems. They are a part and parcel of life.

What is life without its set of ups and downs?

Tragedies and misfortunes, minute or magnified, happen in each and every one's life sooner or later. Not one person on the planet can say with conviction that his or her life has been one hundred percent smooth sailing from the day of birth till today.

Now re-read the above paragraph. Notice the number of negative and disheartening words that have been used. After reading such, you begin to feel a tinge of gloominess. That's what counting your difficulties does for you – it sucks you into a whirlpool of self-pity and inaction.

On the other-hand, counting your blessings in times of adversity has the desired effect – it enhances your mind-set so much so that you lose sight of the problem altogether.

Obstacles could come in various ways – failures, loss of loved one, frustration, devastation – and so many more catastrophes. But how does one emerges victorious from all of this and faces life head on – that's what counts.

The bottom-line is that 'the show must go on'. So life moves forward. Nothing stops. And one has to go on living life with full energy and enthusiasm. Therein lays the elixir of life – To convert obstacles into opportunities and keep forging ahead!

## **Problems Struggles Failures – Embrace them**

Character is not made in adversity; rather it is exhibited in adversity. The right outlook towards ‘problems’ reduces their stature to mere ‘situations’ and they do not seem daunting any more. It is the case of the glass being half-full or half-empty; your attitude is everything.

Be like the Phoenix. The phoenix bird symbolizes immortality, resurrection and life after death, and in ancient Greek and Egyptian mythology it is associated with worship of the sun god. Obstacles, Defeat, Failure – they come in each and every person’s life in some form or the other – sometimes its physically visible sometimes it’s not. Your success and your future is determined by your ‘response to the obstacle, defeat, failure’ – have you perished by it or have you emerged from the ashes like the phoenix bird.



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All obstacles from smallest to biggest can be converted into opportunities. For e.g. When Milk curdles – we convert it to paneer; when Covid19 pandemic emerged – it made India emerge as a preferred business destination.

You will observe on reading biographies/autobiographies of all famous & successful people – the one thing in common in all of them is that they all

overcame some obstacle or the other to emerge victorious & achieve success. It wasn't smooth sailing for any of them.

First published in 1959, "The Magic of Thinking Big" is one of the most influential self-help books of all-times. Written by David Schwartz, it has an entire chapter on 'How to turn Defeat into Victory' and sums up the same saying that

"The difference between success and failure is found in one's attitude towards setbacks, handicaps, discouragements and other disappointing situations."

### **Opportunities always come disguised as Obstacles**

Real action only happens when you are pushed into a corner. Desperate times lead to desperate measures. When humanity faced the covid19 pandemic all of a sudden, it pushed everyone into a corner. People lost their jobs, their relationships and even their sanity. Normal life as we knew it came to a standstill. But then amidst the hopelessness and devastation rose new found ideas which had not been explored before. Out of job workers discovered entrepreneurship and started turning their passion into their new profession. At home ladies and men who had always thought they were lacking meaning in life started pursuing their hobbies and eventually turned them into money-making ventures. There was a plethora of cloud kitchens, home cooked food ventures, online tutoring and new stock market enthusiasts everywhere. What had only been a starry eyed dream before, started turning into a reality? Eventually, without even moving an inch out of their house because of covid19, people were achieving new heights and conquering all their fears – because the 'obstacle' had been converted into an 'opportunity'.

When faced with crisis, we tend to revel in an 'obstacle mind-set'. We need to instead develop an 'opportunity mind-set'. The best way to do this – focus on the solution, not on the problem. There will always be a solution, but the only catch is that it may not be the one 'you' had hoped for. Therefore, it may seem easier for you to keep wallowing in the problem rather than tackle it with your not-so

preferred solution. Focus only on overcoming the obstacle, after that let nature take its course and lead you to wherever it wants to lead you. You will make new discoveries and find new strength which you never knew was present in you. Focus only on your strengths and not on your weaknesses. Keep your mind in a positive mind-set and don't cloud it with negative thoughts. And thus, eventually bit by bit before you know it, you would have transformed the obstacle into opportunity. Later, when the turbulence is over, you will be able to appreciate the 'new perspective' it has taught you.

### **Toolkit you will need to convert Obstacles into Opportunities**

#### **i. DETERMINATION**

Your 'WILL' can change everything. It can pull you out from the depths of misery. It can give you hope. It can make you millions. It can change your fortunes and your future. The 'will' comes from 'within'. You are unstoppable once you have willed it.

GRIT, Determination – is the Most Important tool to tackle obstacles.



Believe in Yourself. ‘You and Only You’ can overcome your limitations. Introspect, improve and innovate – challenge yourself and compete with yourself – to rise beyond your potential.

Depend only on Yourself. Hold only yourself responsible for your setbacks and failures. Compete with Yourself. Challenge Yourself.

“Nothing is impossible in this world. Firm determination, it is said, can move heaven and earth. Things appear far beyond one’s power, because one cannot set his heart on any arduous project due to want of strong will.”

– Samurai Yamamoto Tsunetomo

A man enters the world alone and he is alone when he leaves it. So do not depend on others for fulfilment of your dreams and your life. Take responsibility for your actions and realize that you alone are responsible for what you have achieved or failed to achieve. Blaming circumstances and situations will do no good. The will and determination to conquer all odds and emerge victorious is what makes a person successful.

Always Remember Walter D. Wintle’s poem ‘Thinking’ whereby “Life’s battles don’t always go to the stronger or faster man, But sooner or later the man who wins Is the man WHO THINKS HE CAN!”

Your determination to succeed is the only thing that matters.

## **ii. RESILIENCE**

“When we tackle obstacles, we find hidden reserves of courage and resilience we did not know we had. And it is only when we are faced with failure do we realise that these resources were always there within us. We only need to find them and move on with our lives”. -- Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam better known as A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the 11th President of India and an aeronautical scientist

The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape is called resilience. Some people get punched and knocked down by life time and again, and each time they bounce back stronger. Instead of letting miserable situations break their determination they face their demons head on.

Stand up, dust yourself and get back to work. Tough times don't last forever. Obstacles are as powerful as you imagine them to be. When you don't pay heed to them, they magically fizzle out. Have the ability to spring back into shape. Deal with your problems – that's the only way they will go away. Failures are not an end in itself. They are just new beginnings of something new. Get back up on your feet - you just have to transform, change perspective and work from a different angle.



Be like the Jellyfish. Jellyfish are aquatic animals which have an extraordinary survival skill. When they suffer physical attack, starvation or any other environmental damage they dive back into their development process, transforming back into a polyp. Instead of dying, they change into a tiny blob and then transfer back to the polyp stage within three days. This new polyp is

genetically similar to the original jellyfish, but it is regrouped and reenergized and has transmuted. There is a lot which we humans can learn from the tiny little jellyfish. To obtain success in life we must rework; reorganize and re-energize.

### iii. ATTITUDE

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude”.

– Thomas Jefferson, 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S President

It is the way you look at life that determines your success. If you want to change life, change your attitude. You can achieve only what you think you can achieve. The proverb ‘Attitude determines Altitude’ is a reminder that anything is possible for the person with the right attitude.



When you surround yourself with negativity and stressful people you weaken your attitude. The Negative energy saps your vitality whereas positive energy rejuvenates you. This is a simple fact which has existed since time immemorial and



doesn't need to be proved by science. Remove negative people from around you. People who criticize, complain and grumble all the time sap you off your positive energy and leave you exhausted. Consciously be around optimistic people: Those people who bring out the best in you. Stay as far away as you can from people who drain your energy and have a pessimistic outlook towards life. Surround yourself with optimists and achievers. A good apple will also rot if kept in company of bad apples.

Stop complaining and grumbling about what is coming your way. When you stop criticizing, complaining and cribbing – you will start living: finding solutions and growth patterns. Don't let past events and circumstances cloud your thoughts. What has passed doesn't exist any longer. Don't stress over what is yet to come. Consciously block your mind from darting back and forth. Live in the present and focus on it.

In the end the right attitude will determine your success story. One has to be extraordinary to gain adulation. If you want to enjoy life by living your dream – stay at the top! But remember – at the top there is no space for mediocrity. Your attitude will determine how you outshine.

#### **iv. PERSISTENCE**

It isn't easy: but it has to be done. The only way to get over with it is to go through it: face it headlong. That in a nutshell is perseverance – the persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

It's not that I'm so smart; it's just that I stay with problems longer.

~ Albert Einstein

There are many great men and women in history who have achieved their success through determined insistence – Thomas Edison's perseverance is legendary and he famously said genius is "1% inspiration and 99% perspiration"; Henry Ford; J.K Rowling; Walt Disney; Brazilian retired professional footballer Edson Arantes do

Nascimento, known as Pelé; Venus and Serena Williams; the list is endless. The only way to your goal is to keep moving forward. Keep at it all the time. Persist, persist, persist; no matter how slow you are and how far the goal seems.

He conquers who endures.

– Persius, Roman poet and  
Satirist of Etruscan origin.

Patiently persist. Don't lose your enthusiasm when you suffer setbacks on your road in life. They are mere stumbling blocks. Gather your determination and tenaciousness and with single-minded strength of purpose forge ahead. To reach the pinnacle of success you have to climb the small little steps on the staircase which will take you there.

Remember these principles of persistence:

- Giving Up is NOT an option.
- Work Slowly but Steadily
- Motivate Yourself everyday
- Don't indulge in Self-Pity. It will destroy you
- Don't compare your life with others
- You are not the only one. Almost everyone has not had an easy journey
- Discipline your life
- Believe in Yourself
- Focus on your single minded purpose
- Success doesn't happen overnight. Remember 'Rome was not built in a day'

The more you work, struggle and do whatever it takes to reach closer to your goal, you will observe that the worst is over and somehow things are getting better and better. Remember your goal and your well defined plan to achieve your goal, just focus on it; it will give you the strength to keep moving forward.

“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan ‘press on’ has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.”

- Calvin Coolidge.

So every time you feel like throwing in the towel, remember this famous quote of John Calvin Coolidge Jr., the 30th President of the United States of America. A Republican lawyer from New England he had a quiet but methodical climb up the political ladder,

He conquers who endures. – Persius, Roman poet and satirist of Etruscan origin.

Success and riches are not for the weak. You have to be made of strong metal to survive all odds and march on.

If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

## **Conclusion**

We cannot control events, situations and people. What we can control is ourselves. Obstacles are inevitable for anyone and everyone, but what determines whether one will tide over those obstacles or perish in them, is each person's own 'attitude'. Always forge ahead and never think of a situation or a person as a 'problem', rather treat it as a challenge or a learning experience and make the most of it. Give things time, and eventually you will emerge victorious in all your endeavours.