

Top 8 Things You Must Remember When Everything Goes Wrong

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Several years ago, I had an asphalt customer in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, by the Country Club of Detroit that I did work for each year. He had a beautiful multimillion dollar home, an extremely attractive wife and two beautiful children. Typically, I would visit him, discuss some annual work on his giant driveway, and then return a few days later and do the work. His children would be happily playing in the yard, and his wife would look outside every few minutes to see how they were doing.



The man seemed happy enough, his children seemed happy and his wife seemed happy. He had some nice cars which I always enjoyed looking at, and I enjoyed being around him and his family. There was a nice energy about the place. The last time I saw the man, I chatted with him for about 15 minutes while selling him some asphalt services. We discussed the economy, his children and various other inconsequential things. He seemed quite happy and perfectly normal. A few days later, I returned to the home, and there was no one there. There was a car in the driveway so I could not do the work I was planning to do.

A neighbor came over and asked me to leave. She told me the man had committed suicide the night before. When I returned to the house the next year, he was gone and his wife and children were going about their lives. Four or five years later, they were still in that home, so I doubt he had any money problems that drove him over the edge. Instead, it must have been something I will never know or understand.

I have always remembered this episode because the man appeared so happy and normal on the outside. From what I could tell, he had a great life and a loving relationship with his family. What I could not see was the tremendous pain he must have been feeling on the inside that was overwhelming enough to cause him to shoot himself in the head while his wife and children were home. This level of pain that people silently suffer is often very difficult to fathom. In fact, I know that a lot of people are in pain, and many of the people you encounter daily may be going through serious struggles.

I certainly have had bad things happen to me as well.

- I've been hospitalized with life-threatening illnesses,
- kicked out of my home when I was young,
- had millions of dollars stolen from me,
- been kicked out of school,
- been publicly attacked,
- been divorced,
- been in careers and work environments I could not take, and,
- failed at more things than I can count.

I am pretty confident you have also had some very bad things happen to you. You may have even suffered much worse things than I have suffered.

Lots of really bad things happen to everyone, and they culminate, of course, with death. When things go poorly, people can really get upset. Some people turn to drugs and alcohol on a consistent (even daily) basis. Others isolate themselves and drop out of life. Some people get extremely depressed. Some people get angry. Some people eat or smoke themselves to death. Some people even kill themselves. You do not need to do any of these things.

Here are some reminders of things to keep you on track, happy and motivated:

1. The Smartest Thing You Can Do is to Just Keep Going

I have been in the [legal recruiting business](#) most of my career. When an attorney starts out as a new attorney, the hours can be very long, they may make lots of mistakes, and they may not enjoy the work environment or the people they are working with at all, especially if they start in a large law firm. Many also get very bad reviews when they start out. Others make giant mistakes that make them look foolish to their entire law firm.

Many attorneys I saw screw up and have problems stopped practicing law altogether. Some decided they never wanted to work in a large law firm every again. Others took boring and riskless jobs with the government to protect themselves from

ever screwing up again.

In contrast, many attorneys I know that now have incredible careers are the ones who just kept going. They did not give up and leave when the going got tough. You should be doing the same as well. When things are difficult, the worst thing you can do is quit. You should do your best to keep going.

When my first wife divorced me, I was very surprised. It came out of nowhere. One day, someone showed up at my office with divorce papers. I was very upset and surprised and thought it was the worst thing that had ever happened to me at the time. I allowed myself to be unhappy for a few days. After that, I dusted myself off. I immediately started meeting new people and discovered I was happier than I had ever been in my life.

You need to keep moving forward. You need to keep trying, keep living, keep loving, and keep working. Every issue and problem that you face will eventually go away, but only if you keep moving forward.

See the following articles:

- [Slipping, Falling Down, Gravity and Your Career](#)
- [Play Each Day Like it is Your Most Important](#)
- [The Most Important Thing You Can Do is Have Faith](#)
- [Hypnotists, Worry and Living Your Life Today](#)
- [Winning in Your Job Search and Life Means Going Forward No Matter What Criticism You Think You May Receive](#)
- [Winners and Losers](#)

2. It is Best to Confront Your Pain and What Went Wrong and then Move On

One of the worst things you can do is to pretend like nothing happened to you when something horrible goes wrong. Something very bad did happen to you. If you sugarcoat it and try to ignore it, everything will simply simmer beneath the surface. This can create issues for you, and you may eventually explode.

Many people feel that talking about their problems and getting them out in the open can make them look weak, or that people will think less of them for talking about their problems. This could not be further from the truth. Everyone has problems and getting them out in the open shows others that you are human.

Since I deal with so many people for my job, one thing I have often noticed is that the people who are the most “screwed up” are the people who try and mask their weaknesses or hide their problems and do not confront them. People lie and tell fibs about some of the strangest stuff in order to hide perceived weaknesses.

My parents divorced when I was very young. My mother remarried and was in a very abusive relationship where her husband was beating her up in front of me. She would then get very upset and abuse substances and not be around. While this was not a good thing, what made it worse for me was that I could not tell my father. He wanted custody of me, so if I said anything negative about my mother to him, I would have put myself in a situation where things could have been even worse for me. Not being able to talk about these problems I was experiencing created a certain amount of psychological turmoil for me when I was younger. I would have been happier and better adjusted had I been able to talk to someone about all of this when I was growing up.

If something bad happens to you, it is important for you to be able to talk about it. Once you confront the issue, the process of healing can start. One point of most forms of psychotherapy is to enable people to confront their problems, process them and move on.

I was once staying on a small Greek island 20 years ago or so, and a girl appeared in the small town I was staying in who was clearly not well in the head. I was with a Greek friend of mine and assumed that the girl would be shipped off to a hospital or something for treatment.

“What will happen to her?” I asked.

“The people in the village will sit down and talk to her for a few hours every day until she is better. That is how we handle things here,” he told me.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“She is clearly very upset about something or a bunch of things. When she talks about it and understands it, she will be better. She may need to say what is wrong 15 times, but she will not get better until she talks about it.”

I have always remembered this because I realized that, in this part of the world, this was the only way they could help people who were mentally or emotionally unstable. They sat down and spoke with them and allowed them to talk. Days later, the girl was better. Whatever they did seemed to work.

You may need to see a therapist, join a support group, write in a journal or something similar. Whatever you do, if you are able to confront what went wrong and process it fully, you will get better. There is hope regardless of what your problem is.

See the following articles:

- [Experience a Breakthrough by Confronting Your Pain](#)
- [Confront Problems and Do Not Be a Dabbler](#)

3. When Everything Goes Wrong, Use it as an Opportunity to Improve

The best thing you can do when everything goes wrong is use it as an opportunity to kick everything up to the next level. If some sort of negative thing really has happened to you, and you are really down, why not use this as an opportunity to kick some ass?

When my ex-wife left me, this is what I did.

- I went to the bookstore that evening and bought a book by Dr. Phil about dealing with grief and bad relationships. I read the

- book that night and the next day. I took the book seriously and realized that I was in an unworkable relationship.
- I started going to religious services weekly because that had helped me in the past.
- The following day, I went to a fitness store and bought about \$4,000 worth of fitness equipment to get in shape with.
- I did some research on healthy eating and started eating better.
- I bought a new car I had always wanted.
- I also made plans to start a business that I had always wanted to start (that became one of the 100 fastest growing companies in America a few years later).
- Within a few months, I met my current wife. Now, I have been married over a decade, and I have three great kids.

I used all of this as an opportunity to improve instead of stepping back. It was a great decision and one that everyone should make when things go wrong. What sense does it make to feel badly about yourself? You should be the absolute best person you can be and not let the negative stuff that happens to you hold you back.

I know someone who recently got out of rehabilitation for being an alcoholic. He lost his job and family due to his dependence. He started going to meetings to deal with his issues, and he has improved dramatically. He is happier, looks better and has a new job.

Regardless of what happens to you, make sure that you use your negative experiences to improve. Take whatever happens to you as an invitation to get better.

I know people who were advised by their doctors to quit smoking, lose weight and follow a prescribed diet. When they did not follow their doctors' advice, they suffered from serious heart problems and underwent massive operations. If you have serious health or other issues, you should follow the advice you receive to improve and kick it way up to the next level.

What I like so much about using misfortune as an opportunity to improve is that it gives you a new "positive" goal outside yourself to focus on. This goal motivates you to improve and become a better person and not be held back by the misfortune you experienced.

See the following articles:

- [Never Stop Improving, the Secret to Career and Life Success](#)
- [Never Stop Growing](#)
- [The Best Career Advice You Will Ever Receive](#)
- [Being Able to Start from Scratch is a Gift](#)

4. You Need to Avoid the Negativity of Others

There are some really negative people out there. If you spend time with negative people when something really bad happens to you, you are likely to remain pretty unhappy instead of getting better. Negative people can do a ton of damage to you and make your recovery from any misfortune very difficult, if not impossible.

Unfortunately, the negative people around you are often your parents, significant others, coworkers, and friends. Your happiness often depends on getting away from these people. They may have standards for you that do not match the life you want. For example, I once knew a woman whose mother had profound hostility for her because she was an artist and not a doctor. The mother would remind her that she had gone down the wrong path every single time she spoke to her. The woman experienced massive pain from this and could never feel happy about herself when she was around her mother. Unless her mother changed, it would not be healthy for them to spend time together.

The nagging or critical wife or husband can do profound damage to you. Someone who sees only the negative in the world can do profound damage to you. These people can actually keep you down and make you depressed.

When I am around people who are very negative and sad, I begin to reflect their feelings. It is the same thing with positive and happy people. Happy and positive people can make life better for you. When something bad happens to you, seek out environments and people who are happy and successful and avoid the people who are not.

See the following articles:

- [Surround Yourself with Positive People](#)
- [The People You Work and Associate With Can Either Make or Break You](#)
- [My Lesson from the Missionaries](#)
- [People Around You Can Shape What Happens to You: Avoid the Negative Affirmations of Others](#)

5. It Does Not Matter What Others Think

Many people are quite unhappy because they are concerned with what others think and are doing. The person who has a nice life may not enjoy their life because someone else has a better life. This is crazy. You should be happy with what you have, where you are and where you are going.

If something bad happens to you, the natural reaction for many people is to start thinking about how they compare to others in light of this misfortune. Many people actually feel worse about whatever happened to them based on how it looks to others.

I've known lots of people who lost fortunes for whatever reason. While this is disastrous, in most cases when someone loses a fortune, they still have a roof over their heads. The only thing that has changed is maybe their degree of comfort and how they believe others perceive them.

If you are constantly worrying about how others perceive you, the odds are pretty good you are going to spend your entire life being held hostage by others' perceptions. Because you cannot please everyone, worrying about others is going to leave you unhappy a great deal of the time.

See the following articles:

- [Never Worry About What Others Think](#)
- [Learn Something from the Upper and Lower Class: Do Not Become Paralyzed by the Opinions of Others](#)
- [Why the Grass is Not Greener on the Other Side of the Fence](#)

6. Just About Every Problem is Temporary

There are very few problems that are permanent. If you get cut, you are going to heal. If you lose a job, you will find a new one. If you were close to one person, you can be close to another. Darkness does not last forever, and everything goes in cycles. If you are very upset and depressed about something, it will pass.

When you have a serious problem, the problem will eventually go away. Every problem does. You just need to wait out the problem and get through it. Remaining calm through the worst storms will generally help you get through them and emerge a better person on the other side.

See the following articles:

- [Remain Calm](#)
- [How You Handle Chaos Will Determine Your Success or Failure](#)

7. There Are Always Going to be People Much Worse Off Than You

Regardless of how bad your situation is, the odds are very good there are people out there that are worse off than you are. Every single time I have ever been really down about something, I always hear about or see someone who is much worse off than I am. The compassion I feel for this person, and the gratitude I feel for how good my own situation is, often helps get me through.

When you are very down about something, the best thing you can do is to remember that there are others that are worse off than you. Another very positive thing you can do is find others that you can help that are worse off than you. When you help others overcome their own difficulties, it puts your own problems in perspective and also allows a positive outlet for the pain you feel inside. Helping others is turning the negative you feel into a positive for others. This is one of the most therapeutic things that you can do for yourself.

See the following articles:

- [Self Help Means Helping Others](#)
- [Share What You Know](#)

8. Most Growth Requires Pain

When something painful happens in our lives, it generally forces us to examine the source of the pain and make changes in our lives. Just about every success you are going to experience in your life, and have ever experienced, requires dealing with pain.

Great athletes may practice for years to become successful. Becoming a doctor requires years of schooling. Being great at any profession requires that you spend a lot of time dealing with pain. Most successful people experienced a great deal of pain before they ever achieved greatness:



- **Sarah Jessica Parker.** She grew up in a poor coal-mining town. Her parents divorced when she was two, and her stepfather was often out of work. She had to sing and dance to help support her family. She tried out for a show on Broadway with her brother when she was only 11 and got the part.



- **Shania Twain.** Her parents divorced when she was very young. Her mother and stepmother were killed when she was 21, and she had to raise her three siblings after that. She started singing in local resorts to make ends meet.



- **Stephen King.** He was a very poor writer for years, living in a trailer with his wife. He received a huge number of rejections before selling his first book, *Carrie*, and only received a very meager advance for this.



- **J.K. Rowling.** She had been divorced and was living on government aid. She could not even afford the cost of photocopying for her first novel and manually typed copies of it to send to publishers. Even then, it was rejected several times before being picked up by a small publisher.

See the following articles:

- [We Create Problems So We Can Be Happy](#)
- [Expose Yourself to Pain in Your Job Search](#)

Conclusions

Everyone experiences ups and downs in their lives. Every problem and struggle you go through in your life is an opportunity to improve, to become stronger and to help others (and yourself). Use the problems you experience as a vehicle to grow and become a better person.

I want to know.

What do you do to stay motivated when your world seems to have been turned upside down? What do you use to keep going and stay sane? Please provide your comments below.

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