

## Your Strength Is Your Ability to Control Your Internal World

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Recently, I heard Tony Robbins state in a lecture that his mother had divorced four different men during the course of his childhood. After some time, his mother would divorce each man, claiming he wasn't successful enough.

Imagine what sort of message this must have sent to Mr. Robbins as a young child. Much of our response to life is shaped by what we see happening around us, especially in those formative years. Based on what happens around us, we learn to interpret what's required of us in order to be loved. We form beliefs about what will bring us pain and pleasure. We all want to be loved and to be valued, perceived as important by others. Out of this yearning, we do our best to behave so we will be accepted by the world.

Seeing his mother leave so many men due to their lack of success gave this person an incredible charge. He vowed to be the most successful person imaginable, and he made this goal a priority--more so than you can imagine. Studying success became a driving passion and this man did everything within his power to learn what it would take to become successful.

By the time he was 19 years old, Tony Robbins was traveling around the country, lecturing and giving seminars on how to be successful.

When he was in his mid-20s and lecturing virtually every day of the year about success, he wrote a bestselling book about how to be successful.

Before he was 30 years old, he was lecturing the leaders of different countries, CEOs of important corporations, celebrities, and others about how to be successful.

He became a coach to the most successful people of our time such as Bill Clinton and others. The story of Tony Robbins is inspiring because it shows how people's reactions to situations can have an enormous impact on their direction in life.

I remember when I was in boarding school, a kid whose dad had gone to an elite Ivy League school. The kid enrolled in the boarding school at the same time I did. After his first semester, receiving some mediocre grades, the young man realized there was little chance he would ever get into an Ivy League university, what with one mere semester's worth of bad grades. He was incredibly disappointed. At the moment he saw his marks, his destiny was taking shape. He had the option of trying harder in school and improving his grades, or the option of *dropping out* of the competition. The young man chose this latter option. Instead of trying, he started smoking pot, drinking, and goofing off. Within four or five months the young man was kicked out of boarding school. It took him six years to graduate from a public high school. A large part of his destiny was shaped by how he chose to react to his situation when he received a less than impressive report card.

I knew another guy when I was in college, who had been first in his high school class and had grown up in a small Midwestern town. He wanted to be a doctor. When he arrived at the University of Chicago he took the hardest chemistry class he could in his very first semester. After all, he was extremely intelligent and motivated. After a few weeks, he realized he couldn't keep up with or really even understand what was going on in the class. He flunked altogether. From that point, he believed his hopes of being a doctor had been crushed. This person started partying every night, and eventually, he *barely* managed to graduate from college.

Our destinies are shaped by our responses to the situations we face day-to-day. Every single one of us is continually facing challenges in our lives. Some of these challenges are incredibly serious and others are minor and quite trivial. However, what is certain is that the results we achieve in our lives are directly affected by our responses in each situation. We can choose to respond in either a positive or a negative way. We can choose to be empowered by what happens to us--or destroyed by it.

You are always going to have problems. The myriad issues you face throughout your life aren't going to magically disappear one day. Your strength comes from an ability to respond to these problems in an empowering way that can push you forward, rather than hold you back. Some of the issues you may face:

- You may lose a job.
- You may get a new job and then lose that one too.
- You may get ill.
- Someone close to you may get ill.
- The industry you work in may disappear.

In fact, the number of negative things that could potentially happen to you is almost limitless. The world is constantly throwing you one challenge after another. Many times you simply can't control what happens to you. What you can control, however, is your response to what happens. *No one other than yourself can choose for you how to respond to your own situation.*

One of the things that many people say after losing a job, or being in an industry that is undergoing incredible transformation, is that it's very difficult to be happy when things are so uncertain. Many people, for example, believe their success and happiness is a direct result of their financial security, or lack thereof. We define happiness based on things that are occur outside of ourselves.

When you speak to people, however, and ask about the best moments in their lives, the response is almost always about

moments like the birth of a child, a marriage, meeting someone special, spending time with loved ones, or taking a walk with someone close to them. These valued moments and happy memories don't cost money, and are completely irrespective of one's financial situation. As goes the old adage: The best things in life are truly free.

Some people choose to respond very powerfully to situations by becoming better and better, and expecting more from their lives.

Others choose to respond with incredible sadness and frustration, and they resign.

There are two worlds out there—the external and the internal world. The external world involves things like the health of the economy, the health of our company, accidents, and other twists of fate and circumstance that occur. We have some—but certainly nowhere near total—control over what happens in the external world.

However, we *do* have control over the internal world. The internal world is comprised of our own emotions, how we think and feel about those events that occur in the external world. It's important we do everything within our power to control our internal worlds. We should guard our internal world and take care to use it *for ourselves*, and not *against ourselves*. This internal world is what matters most.

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