

Experience a Breakthrough by Confronting Your Pain

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

One of the darkest moments of my life came during my second year of high school when I was living in Bangkok, Thailand. I was sitting in my bedroom in an apartment building, looking at a backpack filled with all sorts of school work I needed to do that evening. I was failing most of my classes and was very unhappy as a result. I realized if I continued on the same path I was on, I would inevitably be presented with the worst life had to offer. I had the same backpack for several years. Each day after school, I would take my books home from school and would refuse to study. Over the course of a few years I'd been kicked out of one private school, and I'd done poorly in every other school I'd ever attended. *I left my books unopened because I didn't want to study and face what was inside.*

The problem was each day I didn't open the backpack, things would get worse and worse. The algebra class I was taking would move further and further away from me, becoming progressively more difficult to understand. The Spanish class I was in would learn more and more words, with which I couldn't catch up. The history class would leave me seemingly decades behind. With each day's scholastic failure it became more likely that I never would go to college. And more likely that I would soon be kicked out of another school. In addition, the more I ignored the work that needed to be done inside that backpack, the more books I would need to take home each evening. I'd been in school for a few months and the backpack had grown so heavy with work that I could barely carry it any longer.

At that time, I was a horrible student, and didn't have a lot to look forward to in life. The best part of my existence, as it is for many kids, involved the time I spent out on Friday and Saturday nights. In the evenings during the week, I wasn't allowed to go out and have fun. Instead, I was required to stay inside and study. Of course, instead of studying most evenings, I would do anything but. I would read crappy fiction novels and spend my time thinking about things completely unrelated to school. Sometimes, I would drink liquor with my stepsister. Anything but study and face the problems inside that backpack.

I want you to understand something at the outset: That backpack is a metaphor for the problems many of us carry around in life. We all have an incredible number of *issues* that are tucked away in the back of our minds, making us uncomfortable and holding us back. The longer we ignore these problems, the more they build up, controlling and governing a large part of what happens to us in our lives. Try as we might, we can never fully suppress our problems. We can choose friends that don't remind us of our problems. We can choose jobs or careers that allow us to keep our problems in the background. We can occupy our time and our minds with all sorts of things in order to avoid dealing with these problems--and almost all of us do.

Something about this one evening in Bangkok was different, though. I knew I needed to open that knapsack and face what was inside. I was in my second year of high school, flunking all of my classes. My life was headed in the wrong direction. I opened the knapsack, took the books and notepads out, and put them on my desk. I held the empty knapsack in my hand, opened the window of the ninth floor apartment building I was in and tossed the bag out of the window. A gust of wind picked up the knapsack and carried it like a kite. I watched for several minutes before that old backpack finally disappeared, as the sun set over the city.

I sat down that evening and studied all night. I did the same for the next several weeks. I took a nap each afternoon after school and was tired all the time. However, within several weeks I caught up in school and was eventually back on track with my studies.

For the next several years, I never carried a knapsack with me to school. My reasoning was that if I carried a knapsack, I would never *face* the work that needed to be done inside of it. It was symbolic for me but very powerful. By the end of that first year of not carrying a knapsack, I was the top student in my class. My life changed completely, and it was largely due to my facing what was inside of the knapsack. Carrying those school books home in my arms each evening forced me to look at them, rather than keep them hidden.

When we face our problems, everything changes. Most of us are hiding problems, issues that are uncomfortable for us beneath the surface. We suppress and avoid them at all costs--pretending they aren't there at all. Your life is probably being controlled to a large extent by the very issues you are avoiding.

I have attended numerous seminars in the past, and at the best seminars I have witnessed individuals experiencing "breakthroughs"--truly life transformative insights, which altered the course of their lives. When people have these breakthroughs, they end up experiencing more happiness, peace, love, and less fear in their lives. Typically, when people experience breakthroughs there's a massive change that comes over them. It starts when years of built up tension leaves their faces, and their bodies become more relaxed. The people look noticeably happier than before.

A breakthrough means the food you eat will taste better.

In the few times I've followed up with these people after their breakthroughs, I've seen that their lives have undergone fundamental and profound shifts. It's incredible how successful some of them have become. They have created giant companies. They have started families. They have become better workers, husbands, wives, and children. I've been impressed to no end by these stories, and have learned from them that a breakthrough is something that's available to everyone.

Typically, the process of experiencing a breakthrough is as follows: the leader of the seminar will start questioning individuals about one aspect or another of their lives. For example, someone may get up and start talking about his life, which is horrible because his mother hates him. The leader of the seminar will then spend an hour or more showing the person how their mother actually really loves him, demonstrating this with one example after another. Once the person accepts that his mother loves him, the person's relationship with the world is fundamentally altered forever. It's an incredible thing to witness because some of the fundamental ideas, around which a person may have based his entire life, are changed completely. As

a result, the person is able to live a happier and more fulfilling life.

Most of us feel a tremendous amount of discomfort in regards to people, or various situations throughout the average day. In fact, our lives are typically more controlled by what we avoid and move away from than the things we are comfortable with. We build rituals and have other methods for keeping ourselves comfortable, which allows us to avoid the things with which we are uncomfortable. Most of us spend our lives distracting ourselves, avoiding these challenges instead of coming to terms with them.

For a shift to occur in your life, you need to learn to face the discomfort you feel and to navigate through underlying issues. As much as you may hope for it, these issues will not simply go away. It starts with having an awareness and acceptance of the pain or issues you're trying to avoid. Then you need to experience whatever it is that causes you discomfort, totally and completely. It's only by doing so, that you will be able to move beyond the discomfort and feel better. Anything when fully experienced, has the power to fully transform you. It's in awareness that you learn.

When most of us are angry or feeling discomfort, we focus on others instead of ourselves. We are always looking outside of ourselves for the explanation for why we feel uncomfortable and angry. For example, imagine if you were shot with an arrow this very second. What most people would do is look around them and ask themselves "WHO SHOT ME WITH THE ARROW!?" However, logically the first question that should be crossing your mind is "HOW CAN I GET RID OF THIS ARROW?" The focus should be on fixing the problem instead of looking for someone to blame immediately. It's appropriate to blame someone, of course, but you also need to address the source of the pain and this should be your first priority.

Find the source of the pain in your life and confront it. The sooner you confront your pain and work through it, the faster you will experience a breakthrough and transform your life.

THE LESSON

Most of us carry many personal problems around with us in life. By not confronting them, however, we only make ourselves even more miserable. Problems build up as you ignore them, growing until they ultimately control your life. Everything changes when you come to face your problems and take back control over your affairs. The sooner you confront your pain and work through it, the faster you will experience a breakthrough and transform your life.

Read More about Appearing Defensive and Angry:

- [Do Not Be Vengeful: Let Hurt and Anger Go Through You](#)