

## HANDLING ADVERSITY (1<sup>ST</sup> OF 3 PARTS)

Why is it that some very talented persons rush up the ladder to success while other equally talented ones cannot seem to make it? Why is it that persons who do not have as much talent thrive and achieve while others do not?

The answers to these questions are complex. No doubt there are many factors. Raw talent is one. Up bringing is another. The environment that one is into still is another. But the question is about what is it that causes one to succeed while another fails?

Intelligence is no doubt important, but then we know of very intelligent persons whose talents lie quiet and never get actualized.

Well, social scientists have now discovered the adversity quotient, the ability to handle problems, trouble, tragedies, change and of course, adversity of every sort.

Paul Stoltz in his book *Adversity Quotient at Work*, writes, "Your AQ describes your hardwired pattern of response to all forms and magnitudes of adversity, from major tragedies to minor annoyances. It is about how you respond to adversity in the deepest and most automatic recesses of your brain and every cell of your body..."

So AQ measures your ability to take it on the chin like the professional fighter. The champion boxer isn't the guy who does not get hit. All fighters get hit, but the successful ones are those who learn how to fight on even in the midst of hurt (adversity). And the greatest of them all are those who have, what they call, "a lot of heart." Battered, bruised and bloodied they fight on until they prevail.

"Human capacity," says Stoltz, "is composed of talents, aptitudes, skills, experience, knowledge and will. Theoretically, human capacity is boundless. Yet if capacity does not expand quickly enough, enterprise and aspiration can grind to a halt. In fact, as adversity, complexity and uncertainty continue to rise, we face the very real threat that, individually and collectively, we will lack the capacity to meet the world's demands."

He is right. As a counselor, an addiction therapist and a management consultant, I have watched men and women of talent crash because of their inability to hurdle adversity. In corporations, success is not guaranteed for those who have the most brains. Rather it is given to those who can solve problems while pushing forward in the face of obstacles and adversity.

If you read the life stories of successful persons, you will find that all of them had one thing in common: they could handle adversity. They had great capacity to take it on the chin and keep moving toward their goal. They seemed to even thrive on adversity and gain strength from it. Like the man who lifts weight. The more he sweats and lifts, the stronger he becomes.

We live in what Stoltz calls "adversity rich times." Life gets more and more complicated and stressful. The demands made on us increase all the time. Our success will be conditioned by our ability to handle adversity.

## DIFFERENT WAYS PEOPLE HANDLE STRESS (2<sup>ND</sup> OF 3 PARTS)

A person asked Confucius, “What surprises you most about mankind?” Confucius answered, “They lose their health to make money, and then they lose their money to restore their health. By thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live neither for the present nor for the future and they live as if they will never die, and they die as if they never lived.”

Very well said. It’s true, the rich have to diet because they eat too much. They worry themselves to death about losing what they have. Those that don’t have anything can’t live right and neither can those who have too much. Nobody can seem to be satisfied.

As we live in an ever-complicated world, we very much need to expand our capacity to handle the unexpected. And the unexpected usually comes upon us as an adversity of some kind. This ability (the Adversity Quotient or AQ) will determine to a great extent our success or failure in our work as well as in our relationships.

“Today”, writes Paul Stoltz, “everyone faces mounting adversities, and these increasing demands on human capacity require all of us to develop new capacity in the form of higher-level skills and accessible wisdom. If we aren’t able to do this, there will be a growing toll on the soul... We see this toll manifested today in the briefer human interactions, increases in stress-related disease, etc.”

Stoltz writes about three types of persons and how they handle stress and adversity.

First there are the quitters. Quitters in life are those who are overwhelmed by the challenges of life and give up trying, “They ignore, mask or desert their basic core human drive to ascend [to grow] and, with it, much of what life offers. Unfortunately for them, and for those around them, quitters are often bitter and depressed about their lot in life.” They also resent those who move on in life and make it.

Then there are the “campers”. “... They simply don’t strive as hard as they once did. They’ve lost the edge... Campers represent half-tapped potential... They have sacrificed their highest aspirations and contributions for the security and stability they now enjoy.” Campers do just enough not enough as not to fail, but not enough to actualize as much of their potential as possible.

Finally, there are the climbers. “Climbers are dedicated to a lifelong ascent... Climbers make things happen. They are tenacious and refuse to accept defeat for long. They step into the very fear that paralyzes so many others. Although they may face more adversity than others, they continue to think in terms of possibilities and rarely allow any internal factor or external obstacle to get in the way of their ascent. They are fueled by challenges and refuse to be insignificant in their work or their relationships.”

Climbers don’t easily get discouraged. They don’t give up because they have a great capacity for pain. They don’t run from it.

Tomorrow, I want to examine the three types of persons and focus on how they handle their love relationships.

## LASTING LOVE AND HARD WORK (LAST OF 3 PARTS)

Few people, except the “immature”, will disagree that love relationships that last are not easy. If you want to keep love burning intensely for a lifetime you can't be a quitter. And yet, there are many quitters who cannot handle the stresses, the tensions and the inevitable conflicts that love brings.

There is no question about it. Relationships that are solid and endure the best of time will run into their share of adversities. Some will come from external factors. Others will be caused by, what I call, built-in factors. Things like personality traits, values, upbringing, etc.

Your ability to handle these factors—some very hurting than other rather minor—will go a long way toward keeping your relationship strong and vibrant. If you have a low stress level or adversity quotient, you will find it hard to face your problems and deal effectively with them. Even when problems and adversity are dealt with successfully, they always create a measure of stress. How much more if the problems buildup in number and intensity!

There are those who find it too stressful to handle and they bail out. They leave the problems to the wife and hang out with their friends. Then they have no other choice but to confront issues, they freeze and can't talk. They don't know what to do and can't seem to move even when told what to do. In the end, they quit trying to work things out even if they remain in the relationship. Others cannot even stand the marriage and walk away. Too much stress and tension. They decide that the marriage isn't worth the pain they have to deal with.

The campers don't quit, but do as little as possible. Just enough to keep the relationship going, even if it is just limping along. They have decided that they have done the required work and they now stop by the wayside and pitch their tent.

They are not very happy, but they have found ways to make the relationship bearable. They stay out a lot with their work and friends. Do the minimum at home. Love has fallen, but it's enough to keep going, at least for now and maybe for a lifetime. They see no point in working too hard and making things better.

The climbers are different. They want only the very best kind of relationship. They don't care to deal with the mediocre. They know that everything that is worthwhile has price and they are willing to pay it. They remain alert and when adversity strikes, they are not surprised. In fact, they half expect it. But it doesn't bother them very much because they are confident that with hard work and determination and their skills, they will prevail.

They have dream when it concerns their love and they won't stop till they get it. They are willing to face any trial, sacrifice whatever is needed and give as much time as is necessary to ensure a beautiful and lasting love. They refuse to quit and see camping as a form of quitting.

They are never satisfied with the level of their love, but are very happy. They know they can have a more beautiful love and plan to have it, no matter what it takes. These are the climbers but they are in the minority.