

Resilience KOF 2023

Who would you be without adversity in your life?

If you weren't resilient, who would you be?

Resilience and adversity are 2 sides of the same coin.

As Bill Gates says, success is "a lousy teacher" because it "seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose." Every one of us needs to be stretched to be our best. That is why life is difficult.

Resilience is the psychological quality that allows some people to be knocked down by the adversities of life and come back at least as strong as before. Rather than letting difficulties, traumatic events, or failure overcome them and drain their resolve, highly resilient people find a way to change course, emotionally heal, and continue moving forward.

Here are 3 stories about transformation from adversity to resilience:

Story 1

I recently read a book by Rob Gentile called "Quarks of Life". Rob had a heart attack, died and was resuscitated. His heart was so damaged that he needed a heart transplant. During the heart transplant screening, the doctors found prostate cancer which disqualified him from a transplant. After receiving an exemption from the transplant rules, he survived and here is what he said about adversity:

"When we look at adversity through the lens of how we can use it to create a better future; we begin to both recognize and embrace the gifts it has to offer."

Story 2

How many of you have read or watched the Lord of the Rings?

I love the story of Gandalf the Grey's transformation from his battle with the Balrog in the second Lord of the Rings movie.

To refresh everyone's memory or if you haven't seen the movies, Gandalf is a wizard who guides several travelers, known as the fellowship, through a harrowing journey to rid the world of evil. During that journey, Gandalf leads the Fellowship through abandoned mines in the deepest and darkest parts of a mountain range.

Near the end of journey, they encounter a large, evil and extremely powerful monster known as the Balrog. After a fierce battle on a collapsing bridge, Gandalf falls into a deep cavern and apparently dies. But, that wasn't Gandalf's end. Through a resurrection process that wasn't shown, he returns later as Gandalf the White, a wiser and more powerful being.

Story 3

Throughout my life, I've experienced many traumas (with a capital T) and setbacks.

Over the last 15 years, I've been working through a lifelong case of PTSD. From my inner work, I developed a strong spiritual connection, empathy, creativity and a life of purpose. And, because I have capacity to be with my own intense pain and dark emotions, I can hold space for others to feel and express theirs. I thrive with deep work.

What makes people resilient?

The American Psychological Association says "Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands." Or, "the capacity to recover from difficulties". With tools and resources we can bounce back, even stronger.

What are those tools?

I read many different sources with different recommendations. Here are some of the common ones, as well as what personally helped me:

1. Grit and determination. For many years I believed that adversity was always there because I was born unlucky. AND, I believed that I could work hard enough to overcome my bad luck. Nothing was going to beat me.

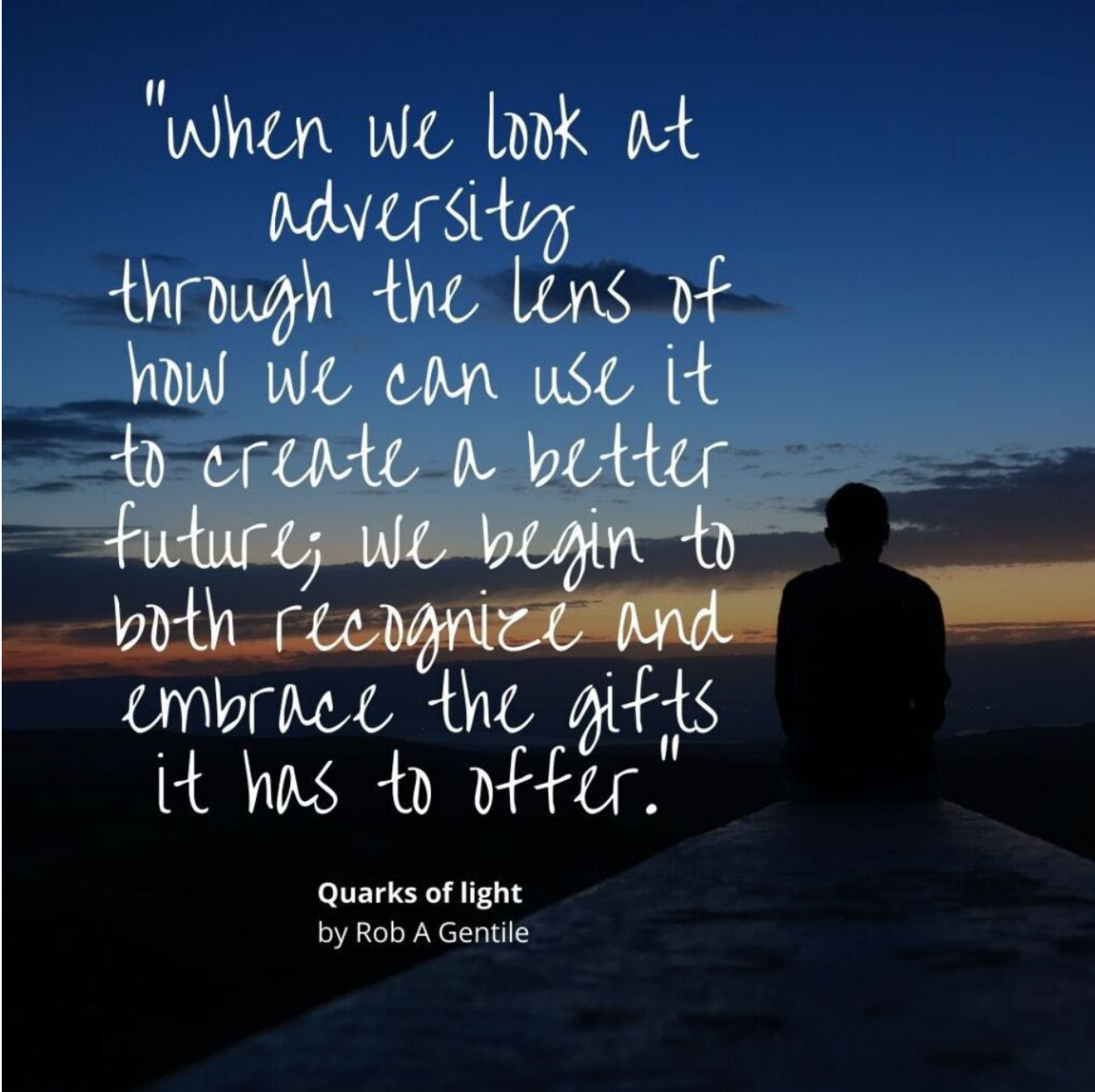
2. Asking for help when needed. For me, I knew I couldn't recover from PTSD without the help of skilled therapist. Thankfully, I found a great one and continue to see him regularly.
3. Cultivating a support system- Connecting with empathetic and understanding people who supported me the depths of recovery was vital for me. Words can't express how impactful they were.
4. Making self-care a priority. Which includes:
 - a. Physically, taking care of myself. One of my first steps was finding treatment for my insomnia. Without Ambien, I didn't sleep. I enrolled in a Sleep Disorders Clinic at the Cleveland Clinic. They also treated my restless legs.
 - i. I've changed the way I eat and have a regular exercise routine.
 - b. Practicing gratefulness.
 - c. Avoiding negative outlets like drinking
 - d. Feeling my feelings and learning to let them move through me without getting sucked in.
 - e. Having a set a tools to handle my PTSD, when I have a flashback or intense emotion.
5. Healthy thinking
 - a. being optimistic
 - b. avoiding irrational thoughts,
 - c. viewing it as a growth opportunity and an opportunity to find and develop a deeper connection with your authentic self.
 - d. Redirecting negative thinking. I no longer believe that I am unlucky. Instead, my life experiences developed and revealed new abilities. Its less, but there sometimes-is a voice of my abusers saying awful things to me. This one is still a work in process for me.
6. Finding meaning. I developed a life purpose statement years ago. Through my recovery, my real life purpose began to reveal itself. I'm also involved with a local radio station. Part of the programming is addressing the challenges of mental health, addiction and recovery from all conditions. We started a podcast. I shared my experiences with the trauma and how I'm recovering. I've moved from NEVER

talking about my past to talking about it openly so that others may find inspiration to begin their own recovery.

7. Expressing myself through creativity. I always had an outlet. About 9 years, I started making jewelry. It is a very meditative practice for me.

Here are your questions:

1. What tools and resources do you have now to help in difficult times?
2. Describe a difficult time in your life. What gifts did that situation give you?
3. What else do you want to do to build your resilience?

A person is silhouetted against a sunset sky, sitting on a ledge and looking out over a landscape. The sky is a mix of deep blue and orange, with some clouds. The person is in the lower right foreground, looking towards the horizon.

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Quarks of light
by Rob A Gentile