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Adversity can strike anyone at any time. Whether it is a lost job, illness, divorce, financial woes, emotional distress, or loss of a loved one, the difficulty encountered can often knock a person to their knees.

As we go through life the truest measure of our inner strength will be exposed when we are confronted by adversity. We can either pack it in and hibernate, or unpack, grab what we need, and get at it. And quite often, when we make the choice to face adversity head on, we become stronger than anticipated. Thomas J. Watson, former CEO of IBM, said: “Within all of us are wells of thought and dynamos of energy which are not suspected until emergencies arise. Then, oftentimes, we find that it is comparatively simple to double or triple our former capacities and to amaze ourselves by the results achieved.”

During my days of involvement in military operations, I was always astonished at how squads of elite men and women could suddenly outperform, outlast, and out-think the enemy when we all felt we were on the brink of collapse from total exhaustion. No matter how dire a situation became, we caught our breath, tightened our straps, drank some water, and advanced. We moved onward and upward until the mission was accomplished.

Chris Novak, author of *Conquering Adversity*, is a great example of making the choice to move forward, even after unimaginable tragedy. He wrote about the time he received a phone call in the middle of his work day learning that

his wife and unborn son had just been killed in an automobile accident. This is the type of news, that some of you can attest to, can paralyze even the strongest person with shock and grief. That call Chris received changed his life forever. No one would have blamed him for being bitter and consumed with the unfairness of life.

Yet, after grieving this tragic loss, Chris chose to take the lessons of catastrophe and create opportunities from the alternatives his life now offered. In *Conquering Adversity*, he tells how he was able to move forward, saying, “Life is not fair, so don’t expect it to be. Regardless of how bleak the situation appears, there are alternatives that will help you move forward—if you choose to see them.”

Chris Novak suggests that you attack adversity by doing the following:

Affirmation. Acknowledge what is and what is not lost. But even in the greatest of tragedies, we have to acknowledge that we do not lose everything. The fear of moving forward is the power adversity has over us. Ultimately, we have to make the decision to move ahead.

Expectation. Adversity attacks our vision, limits our sight, and blinds us with the challenges of the moment. After adversity attacks us, we have to make the choice to pull ourselves up, avoid the “why” trap, and move forward with positive expectations.

Communication. To conquer adversity, we have to allow others to help. Many times we struggle by ourselves, dealing with adversity when someone just a phone call away will have an answer that can move us forward.

People want to help, but most of the time they have to be invited.

Locomotion. One of the greatest dangers in facing adversity is that we panic, freeze, and stop because we perceive the roadblocks, barriers, or mountains in our lives as insurmountable. People respond better to crisis when they maximize their forward motion. We have to keep moving forward.

Collaboration. Most challenges we face cannot be overcome alone. We should not attempt to meet adversity with no one to support us. Collaboration is about the people we take with us on our journey forward.

Celebration. Celebration feeds our positive energy and our sense of hope. It nourishes our spirits, refreshes our attitudes, and gives us strength to fight off the inevitable attacks of negativism and fear that accompany severe adversity.

Today, Chris Novak continues to live his life to its fullest. He has remarried and is enjoying life with his wife and son. His metamorphosis serves as a positive example for all of us about how to use catastrophe as a catalyst in our lives.

Now I know this is much easier said than done, but always try to realize that an adverse event is short term. It happens and is gone. If you move forward with the information in this column in mind, you can overcome the initial onslaught of adversity or difficulty. And always remember these words of wisdom from the great author William Shakespeare: “This, too, shall pass.”

~ The End ~