

GROW

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ACTIVITY SHEET



Things don't always go according to plan and unexpected adversity or tragedy can be devastating to encounter. If your dreams have been shattered and you are left feeling disillusioned and hopeless, what do you do? You may quickly realise there's nothing you can do to undo the damage. All you can do is pick up the pieces and decide what to do next. This session lays out a plan of how to take that which has been broken or shattered, and fashion something new.



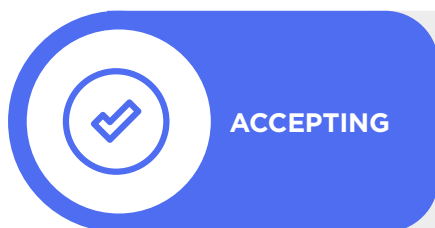
PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you:

- (a) understand it's not how you start out; it's how you finish that counts
- (b) learn how adversity can be a training ground for leadership
- (c) develop servant-leadership character-strengths that help turn adversity into opportunity

The Response Factor

You cannot control everything that happens to you in life; however, you are able to exert control over the way you respond. Whether a tree is damaged by an unexpected storm, or all the trees in the forest are destroyed by a bush fire, you are faced with a choice to either focus on your loss or focus on the possibility of regrowth. People typically react to difficult or devastating circumstances in different ways. Some are more advantageous than others.



ACCEPTING

Accepting your current circumstances is to acknowledge you can't always control your circumstances, but you can always control how you respond. Things only tend to improve when loss and pain are first acknowledged. Acceptance is not merely the acknowledgement of problems and challenges, but the determination to make the best of any situation you find yourself in.



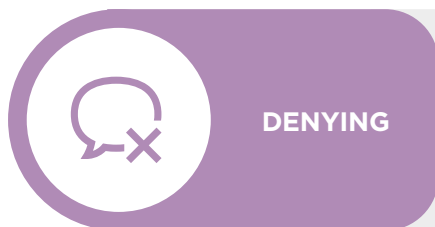
FIXATING

It is a natural tendency to focus on the painful events that you've experienced. However, fixating on your current problem or challenge only serves to reinforce your loss and pain. Over time, hopelessness and despair creep in. When you get trapped into fixating on your present problem or challenge, you lose sight of what a positive future could look like.



AVOIDING

Avoiding thinking about your present situation might sound like a reasonable way to prevent yourself from 'fixating' on your loss and pain. However, when you avoid facing your fears, rather than going away, fear tends to grow. Fear paralyzes you from effectively responding to present problems or challenges.



DENYING

To avoid the pain of facing your reality, you may pretend things are different. But denying your present reality is a refusal to accept the truth. Denying the truth of your present reality, therefore, keeps you in bondage. It's commonly acknowledged that the truth may hurt, but it is also what sets you free.



Which response style is being portrayed by each of the following statements?

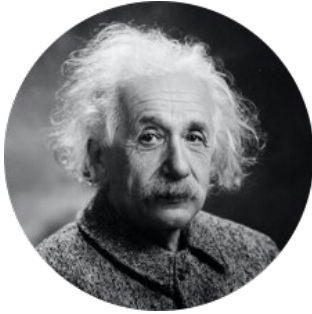


OF THE FOUR DIFFERENT RESPONSE STYLES ONLY ‘ACCEPTING’ PROVIDES A FOUNDATION FOR HOPE.

ACCEPTANCE IS NOT MERELY THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HARDSHIP, BUT THE DETERMINATION TO MAKE THINGS BETTER. WE ACCEPT THE PRESENT BUT LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH NEW EXPECTATION.

From Bad to Best

People who GROW through critical incidents and tragic circumstances typically find a way to make the best out of a bad situation. Despite great challenges, countless people throughout history have demonstrated their ability to accept their situation, cultivate authentic hope and believe the best about their future. Some of the greatest public figures, prophets, statesmen, politicians, leaders and dignitaries all faced desperate circumstances, but overcame their obstacles and moved from tragedy to triumph.



ALBERT EINSTEIN

Unable to talk until age 4; unable to read until age 7; eventually expelled from school. Went on to become the most famous genius of the 20th century.



WILMA RUDOLPH

Wore a leg-brace as a child and told she would never run. In 1960, won 3 gold medals in track and field (first American woman to do so at a single Olympics).

NELSON MANDELA

Imprisoned for 27 years. Upon his release, he became South Africa's first black president at the age of 77. He forgave his jailers and brought peace and reconciliation to his nation.



VIJAYALAKSHMI DESGMANE

Ostracised due to her father's stance against child-temple-prostitution. Sold vegetables to pay her way through school. Became a surgeon and one of the most renowned oncologists in India.



ZHANG XIN

Grew up poor and destitute (homeless at age 8). She went from working on an assembly line in a sweatshop to building one of the most innovative property development companies in China. She's now one of the richest people in the world.



BETHANY HAMILTON

At age 13, she survived a shark attack in which her left arm was bitten off. Two Movies ('Soul Surfer' and 'Unstoppable') have been made about her faith in God and subsequent return to professional surfing.

From the Pit to the Palace; from Prison to the Presidency

The following four scenarios are taken from a historical account of a man named Joseph (also Yusuf or Yosef), who scholars estimate lived between the 18th and 16th centuries BCE (about 4000 years ago). Lesson's from the life of Joseph have been embraced and taught by people of diverse faith from around the world (as recorded in the Koran, Torah, and The Holy Bible). All ancient texts highlight the fact that Joseph was confronted with numerous critical incidents and tragic events. Yet Joseph is celebrated for his acceptance of circumstances, ability to respond effectively and capacity to grow.



SCENARIO 1

As a young boy, Joseph had a dream that his Creator would exalt him to a position of such great importance that even the sun and moon (representing his parents) and stars (representing his brothers) would bow down to him. Joseph was highly favoured by his father, which made his brothers jealous. Some of his brothers planned to kill Joseph and reclaim the favour of their father. One brother argued against this, throwing him instead into an empty well. Shortly after, a caravan of travellers passed by and Joseph was sold into slavery. As a slave in Egypt, Joseph worked very hard. He became the very best at the tasks allocated to him and was promoted, ultimately becoming responsible for running his master's entire household and business affairs.

Q: Even though Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, separated from his family and sold into slavery, how did he hold on to authentic hope?

HINT: Rather than focusing on loss and pain, Joseph focused on working hard and serving well - ultimately receiving favour (being promoted to a important position)

SCENARIO 2

Despite Joseph working hard and being well liked, his master's wife tried to seduce him. When she was unsuccessful, the master's wife accused Joseph of betrayal and he ended up in prison. Yet Joseph maintained a close relationship with his Creator and never lost hope. In prison he was shown kindness and experienced favour from the Chief of the Prison. Joseph continued to serve and work hard. He was eventually placed in charge of all other prisoners.

Q: Even though Joseph was betrayed a second time by his master's wife and sent to prison, how did Joseph hold on to authentic hope?

HINT: Joseph used his time in prison to continue to GROW in leadership. He focused on working hard and serving well. Throughout it all, he maintained his faith in a Creator who cared about him.

SCENARIO 3

Just like the dreams he had as a young boy of being exalted to a position of great importance, Joseph had a gift of interpreting dreams for others. While in prison, he interpreted a dream for a prisoner - that he would be released and placed back into the courts of the Pharaoh. When the prisoner left the prison (just as Joseph had foretold), Joseph asked him to help secure his own release. However, the former prisoner forgot about Joseph and he remained in prison for a few more years. Eventually, Joseph interpreted a dream for the Pharaoh himself, and was set free from prison. He was promoted to a position of such great authority in the land of Egypt that even his own family would bow down to give him honour (just like in his dream as a boy).

Q: Even though Joseph was betrayed a third time (by the former prisoner who forgot to help secure Joseph's release from prison), how did Joseph hold on to authentic hope?

HINT: Joseph focused on serving others (using his gift to interpret the dreams of others). It's also possible that Joseph held on to the hope that if the dreams of others could come true, then perhaps the dreams he had as a boy may also one day come to pass.

SCENARIO 4

Serving and working hard in both the palace and the prison had shaped in Joseph the necessary leadership qualities for a position of great authority in Egypt. A famine came upon the land, but Joseph had wisely amassed much grain, allowing him to sell it to people far and wide. When Joseph's father sent his sons to Egypt to buy some grain, he recognised his brothers who had betrayed him several years earlier. But instead of seeking revenge, Joseph forgave his brothers and was reunited with his father.

Q: Because Joseph was in a position of great authority, he could have severely punished or even executed his brothers when he recognised them. Why didn't Joseph seek revenge?

HINT: If a person holds on to their hurt and pain, they become 'fixated' to seek revenge. Revenge may feel good and even seem right in the moment, but it ultimately only brings more hurt and pain. Revenge never removes the pain or loss. Reconciling the past, allowed him to get on with his future.



THE STORY OF JOSEPH IS VERY SIMILAR TO THAT OF NELSON MANDELA. BOTH WERE BETRAYED, YET MAINTAINED A POSITIVE ATTITUDE, WORKED HARD AND SERVED WITH EXCELLENCE (EVEN WHEN IN PRISON). INSTEAD OF MERELY ENDURING THEIR SENTENCE, THEY BOTH DEVELOPED THE NECESSARY LEADERSHIP AND PRESIDENTIAL QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR THEIR FUTURE.

Instead of taking revenge, they focused on becoming a force for good in the lives of others.

People who go from tragedy to triumph accept their circumstances, but also position themselves to cultivate authentic hope, and develop skills and qualities to make the best out of a bad situation. Despite whatever challenges they may face, they choose to continue growing in character and looking forward to a positive future.

Take Action

The choices you make today will have the biggest impact on your tomorrow. By accepting your present reality and choosing to make the best of it, you'll start to see your current situation as a training ground for your future. The way you choose to respond in difficult times helps mould you into the leader you were born to be. Servant leaders lead by example to help others, effectively leading their family, building business or serving their community.



Q: Are there current opportunities where you can also serve with excellence, that will pave the way for a positive future?

Q: What other ways can you accept your present reality and use it to develop leadership qualities for the positive future that awaits you?

Q: What pain, bitterness or resentment might you perhaps need to let go of (so as to no longer be trapped or held captive by your past, and have the courage to get on with your future)?

(a) Are there people you need to forgive? (specify)

(b) Are there desires or plans for revenge you need to let go of?

(c) Are there mistakes you've made or people you've hurt that perhaps you may need to resolve or seek forgiveness for?