

## ADVERSITY OR ASSET?

Arguably the clearest mirror you will ever find in which you can really see yourself, both strengths and weaknesses, is the mirror of adversity. It is when your back is against the wall that you can most easily see who you are. Not only can you see yourself clearly in the mirror of adversity, but you will also see others clearly too. It is when you are challenged to the extreme, stretched beyond your capacity, struggling to cope and to find a way through, that you can see who you are. Adversity is not to be feared, it needs to be understood because it not only introduces you to the truth about yourself and others, but adversity also offers you the opportunity to grow and positively change.

We all ache for a life which is peaceful, happy and contented, a life of certainty and stability, a life without difficulty. However, we also need to embrace the truth that a life without adversity, without challenge, without difficulty denies us some of the important lessons, which we also need to learn and appreciate. This isn't to say that we need to go looking for difficulties and problems. Not at all. It's far more about accepting adversity when it comes. It's about understanding its value, significance and meaning and by appreciating the contribution it makes to our lives we're able to respond constructively and creatively. Please don't think we are promoting the idea that a life of adversity is somehow a virtue to be pursued. However, we are saying adversity offers you a positive legacy if you choose to embrace it. If you look around you, those who have embraced adversity do have a certain quality and strength that is often difficult to define and is not easily replicated.

When you look into the mirror of adversity, you'll probably find some things that surprise you, things that you like and can respect. You may equally discover things that you don't like which generate feelings of distaste. Whatever you discover you need to 'know' because until you 'know the truth' about yourself in all its different shapes and forms you are unable to change in the ways you most need to (see handouts N.O.S.E. 1 & 2). It's when you can see and face the truth about yourself that you can resolve the pains, the hurts and the suffering of the past. So, it is important to realise that adversity can indeed be a priceless asset. You can convert your challenging experiences, through understanding, into very valuable jewels, that will add colour and beauty to your life. Every adversity offers you a gift, a gift of how you can better live your life, the gift of how you can improve your relationships, the gift of positive change and numerous opportunities to grow. Whatever gift it is, it will add value, meaning and purpose to your life. So, starting from today, look back at the adversities you have had to face and see what lessons each one came to teach you. Each lesson is a signpost, pointing you in the right direction, inspiring you to reach your destination. Try looking back with a different pair of eyes and see if you can decode and decipher what each adversity came to teach you - and once you can find that, take the gift of your experience and see if you can use it to enrich your understanding.

Turn your adversity into assets and you'll be surprised by the abundance of riches you already possess. The journey of self-discovery is not grounded in the philosophy of 'no pain, no gain', although some pain and discomfort are almost inevitable, this is a journey of liberation and joy. The more you do the work on yourself the more you will find the joy that already lives inside you (see handouts Empowerment and Self-Realisation). To focus on the pain and discomfort is a flawed perspective. It is critical to keep your focus on the gains i.e., peace of mind, stability, clarity of thought and contentment. This is what transforming your adversity into assets is really all about; joy not pain, responsibility, not blame and wisdom, not intellectual naval gazing!