

Overcoming Adversity

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So you think you've got it tough? Clip this article and save it for a time when you are feeling down. (It happens to all of us!) Ponder how blessed you are, then shake off the pity and get yourself going again!

Helen Keller, left blind and deaf from an illness before age 2, graduated cum laud from Radcliffe College, published twelve books, and became an international advocate for the disadvantaged.

Nelson Mandela served 27 years in prison for protesting against racism in the government of South Africa. Released in 1990, he began an international effort to end apartheid. In 1994, Mandela was elected South Africa's first black President, serving until 1999. He catalyzed huge change in Africa and around the world.

Abraham Lincoln, 16th US President, was born into poverty, suffered from bad looks and a difficult marriage, had terrible bouts of melancholy, failed in business, declared bankruptcy, and suffered many election losses: state legislature (1832), Congress (1843), Senate (1854, 1858), Vice-President (1856).

Walt Disney, fired by a newspaper editor for lacking imagination, went bankrupt several times before founding Disneyland (which was initially rejected by the city of Anaheim based on their impression of amusement parks).

Others who filed for bankruptcy included Henry Ford, Donald Trump, Burt Reynolds, Jerry Lee Lewis, Wayne Newton, Thomas Jefferson, Ulysses S. Grant, William McKinley, Henry Ford, Mark Twain, Dionne Warwick.

PAUSE! In this article are only a few of the many people I could have cited as overcoming adversity. Pick one who appeals to you. Do some of your own investigation. Determine for yourself what it must have been like to have lived that person's life. Then look at your own situation afresh. Give thanks for your blessings!

Theodore Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, was rejected 27 times before Vanguard Press accepted and published *And to Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, the first of his 46 incomparable children's books.

Fanny J. Crosby was blinded by a doctor's malpractice at six weeks of age. She developed an amazing memory for the Bible and wrote over 8000 Christian hymns, including "Blessed Assurance" in 1873.

Booker T. Washington, born of poor slave parents, having no access to the resources of white society, was the first teacher at what became Tuskegee Institute. He developed into a popular author and public speaker.

Charles Schultz, creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip, was lonely and standoffish in high school, terrified of girls. Early in his career, Schultz was turned down by the Disney studios for a cartoonist job.

Jacques Cousteau wanted to be an astronaut. However, he broke both arms and was not able to attend the French Naval Academy. He taught himself to swim to strengthen his arms. He developed the aqualung in 1943. He became the world's most famous aquanaut and oceanic researcher.

Sylvester Stallone was taunted in school and was in and out of multiple foster homes. His "Rocky" script was rejected many times (some accounts say 1500!) before he convinced United Artists to produce the movie.

Nick Vujicic was born with no arms or legs. As a child, he struggled mentally, emotionally, as well as physically. He has become a world traveler, author, and motivational speaker. Take a moment to watch Nick on YouTube!

Wilma Rudolph, winner of three 1960 Olympic gold medals in track and field, was born prematurely and contracted the polio virus at age 4 and later scarlet fever. Despite her left leg being deformed and wearing a leg brace and orthopedic shoes, she became the fastest woman in the world in the 60's!

Thomas Edison, inventor, was unimpressive academically. His teacher told him he was too stupid to learn anything and should go into a field where he might succeed based on his pleasant personality.

Jim Abbott, a major league pitcher from 1989 to 1999, was born with no right hand. In 1993, pitching for the New York Yankees, he threw a no-hitter against the Cleveland Indians.

I'll bet you have your own favorite story about someone overcoming adversity. Will you please send it to me? I'd like to publish another article like this one, using descriptions that readers have provided to me.

Remember the purpose of this article! You've overcome your own adversities and struggles. The next time you feel discouraged, recall your efforts to conquer past circumstances! Motivate yourself using your gratitude for what you've been given and by focusing on your former creativity and tenacity. You are an amazing being!