

A PEER'S PERSPECTIVE: GOOD FROM BAD

by Jill Davis, CPFS

“When life gives you lemons, order the lobster tail!” – Ziad K. Abdelnour

The older I get the more it becomes crystal clear that life isn't always going to play out the way I'd like. Oh, to be able to avoid the tragedies and traumas that can pummel my otherwise serene existence. Just like the rolling waves of an ocean, life and its variables come and go and crash with overpowering strength. It's understandable and expected that traumatic experiences can leave deep impressions down to the core and they can affect our lives well past the time of impact. The adage that reminds us that there are two sides to every story rings true here as well. Can we gain value from situations that seem devoid of value? Walk with me if you will, along this path for a bit and let's find out.

One summer, so the story is told, there was a boy who found a cocoon securely tethered to one of the plants in his mother's garden. For many days, he watched intently. When the butterfly began to break free, the boy was thrilled, but soon became concerned when he saw the brave butterfly struggling. He quickly got a small pair of scissors and carefully cut through the cocoon enough so that the butterfly was able to exit with ease. The young boy was elated and waited to see what would happen next. Over the course of the next few days, the boy spent much of his time watching and waiting until the time when the new butterfly would majestically spread its wings and fly, that didn't happen. In fact, the creature spent the rest of its life crawling around with shriveled wings attached to a shrunken body. The boy spent the remainder of the summer puzzling over what went wrong. When school started, he asked his science teacher what had happened. The teacher revealed to the boy that the butterfly NEEDED the struggle in order to fight its way out of the cocoon and told him that the struggle allowed the fluid in its body to be pushed into its wings so that it could fly. Without the struggle, the butterfly would never have the strength to spread its wings and fly. **What strength have you gained from your struggles?**

My oldest son dealt with cancer and is currently three years in remission; it is definitely something worth celebrating! Before getting to this point, however, there were complications that often lead me to wonder about his chances of surviving the harrowing ordeal. What seemed like an endless number of sleepless hours in the hospital resulted in increased appreciation of each minute that life can offer, not only for my son but in my own life. I now view each day as a gift that has so many options and opportunities! **What do you appreciate about life since your traumatic experiences?**

In this brief walk together we have looked at just two areas of what is known as Post Traumatic Growth, the others being relationship changes, spiritual growth, and the possibilities to feel that you can step into in a life that you couldn't prior to the trauma or struggle you've come through. It's easy and normal to look at the ways that tough times have weighed us down, here's a challenge: **What positives can you take from tough times you've come through? How have you grown? What can you offer to someone currently experiencing similar challenges?** The possibilities waiting inside of you may surprise you!



Jill Davis is Peer Services Coordinator for Mind Springs Health and gratified by hearing from her readers. Drop her a line at Peers@MindSpringsHealth.org