

Press 'Save' on Life's Lessons

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Think for a moment about your most significant life experiences. Maybe a significant achievement or promotion. Maybe an accident, break up, or missed investment opportunity. Or a great trip, successful project, or memorable family outing. If you think about recent formative experiences, maybe one was related to the COVID pandemic. The pandemic created many significant experiences including health scares, financial challenges, and conflicts between friends and family.

Everyone has formative experiences. As we mature and life happens, we can all say “I’ve been there done that” to most circumstances. Actually, we all experience very similar circumstances. We all experience moments of great joy and satisfaction as well as sadness, frustration, regret, and embarrassment. We all have problems as well as opportunities. Yet we process our experiences differently. For example, the pandemic caused some to become grateful for what they took for granted before. Others struggled to find any good in it at all. Some who dealt with medical issues turned their issues into positive and permanent lifestyle changes. Others went back to old habits as soon as they could.

Are you one who learns from difficult experiences and makes life enhancing adjustments? Or one who tries to forget them? Do you reflect on circumstances with the intent to improve yourself? Or with the hope that others will improve themselves? Do you press the save button or delete button on life’s circumstances? Some studies say this single choice is the root of people’s success ... or lack of success.

Some people don’t learn from their adversity. They don’t accept responsibility for their mistakes. They don’t take in corrective feedback. Therefore they don’t learn and apply the valuable lessons life reveals to them.

Consider what are you dealing with right now? How are you thinking about it? Is there a learning opportunity in it somewhere? Maybe you didn’t create the issue, but can you be better from it in some way? Could you do something different next time it happens? Or could you prevent it altogether? What should you be learning? Below is a list of common learning takeaways from life’s experiences. Consider if any of these apply to what you are dealing with right now. Ask yourself, do I need to:

- Be more patient.
- Be less judgmental.
- Forgive and let go.
- Possess more gratitude.
- Express more humility.
- Take more responsibility.
- Be more trusting and faithful.
- Have greater contentment.
- Ask for help ... or offer to help.
- Better prepare or plan.
- Be more direct or ... be more compassionate.
- Speed up or slow down.
- Do more or less.
- Be more formal ... or informal.
- Speak up more ... or talk less.
- Exercise more self control.



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You may be living in a season of prosperity and peace right now without significant difficulties. If so, enjoy yourself. But difficulties are part of life. When adverse circumstances arrive, particularly if you are quick to dismiss them rather than develop from them, consider this approach to learning what you can from them and becoming the best you can be:

1. Keep a record of your formative experiences, both the good and the bad ones. Journal your achievements and advancements as well as your problems and conflicts.
2. Once you are able to process them logically, reflect on what you might learn from them. Record what you plan to start doing, stop doing, continue doing, or do differently.
3. Do some homework. Research the behaviors or actions you are thinking of changing. Talk to a trusted friend, family member, or colleague. Confirm or adjust your thinking.
4. Apply your lessons learned. Put your new mindset or behavior into practice. Take a step in the direction you plan to go. Then another step and another until your lesson becomes a normal part of your life.

As the cliché goes, never waste a crisis. Or any formative experience. Press the save button rather than the delete button. Practice the philosophy of the great physicist Albert Einstein who said, “the only mistake in life is the lesson not learned.”

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