Get Over It! Strategies for Overcoming Adversity in the Workplace

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What is adversity?

ad·ver·si·ty

noun
\ad-ˈvər-sə-tē\n
a state or instance of serious or continued difficulty or misfortune

Source: Merriam-Webster
Our Definition

In IT Speak: Adversity is binary!
• You want 0s, you get 1s.
• You want Xs, you get Ys.
Five Strategies
Take Action

• Try to improve things
  – Speak up!
  – Take initiative!
• Make a plan
• Do *something* to create change.
Be Prepared

• Preparation increase the chances of good results and reduces a situation’s negative impact

• To do this:
  – Set goals
  – Plan ahead
  – Strategize
  – Practice
Learn Something

• Take the time to reflect
• Learn from successes and failures
• Make next time better
Reframe Your Thoughts

• Find the positive
• Consider alternative points of view
• Check yourself – are you creating a state of mental adversity?
Lean on Your Relationships

• Get an outside perspective
• Ask for help!
• Express your emotions
Five Anti-Strategies
Lashing Out

• Examples
  – "How can you be that stupid?"
  – "This is complete garbage."

• Instead
  – Be constructive if you can
  – At least be neutral in identifying the problem
Avoiding Necessary Change

• Examples
  – Passive-aggressiveness
  – Paying lip service
  – Refusing to change

• Instead
  – Try it and see
  – Raise valid concerns
Running from the Problem

• Examples
  – Concealing an issue
  – Minimizing problems
  – Not admitting to a problem

• Instead
  – Address issues head-on
  – Be proactive
Cynicism

• Examples:
  – “Just watch, the new boss will be just as bad as the old boss.”
  – “Nothing ever happens if you make a suggestion.”

• Instead
  – Voice your concerns!
  – Be part of the solution

"While skepticism is healthy, cynicism, real cynicism, is toxic."
– John Oliver
Serious Anti-Strategies

• Dissociation
  – Disconnecting

• Anxious avoidance
  – Excuses to get out of something. This creates a cycle of unnecessary fear.

• Escapism
  – Including self-medication

• Depression
Adversity Examples
If...you caused the problem

- Don’t
  - Hide
  - Spread the blame
- Instead
  - Fix it
  - View it as a lesson
  - Plan for next time
If...this is unforeseen adversity

- Don’t
  - Blame the process
  - Be cynical
- Instead
  - Learn to anticipate
  - Reframe as a funny story
  - Increase preparation
Excerpt from “Way of the Peaceful Warrior” by Dan Millman

An old man and his son worked a small farm, with only one horse to pull the plow. One day, the horse ran away.


“Who knows whether it is bad luck or good luck,” the farmer replied.

A week later, the horse returned from the mountains, leading five wild mares into the barn.

“What wonderful luck!” said the neighbors.

“Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?” answered the old man.

The next day, the son, trying to tame one of the horses, fell and broke his leg.

“How terrible. What bad luck!”

“Bad luck? Good luck?”

The army came to all the farms to take the young men for war, but the farmer’s son was of no use to them, so he was spared.

“Good? Bad?”
If you experience personal adversity

• Don’t
  – Inflict your pain on others
  – Bury the problem
  – Engage in serious anti-strategies

• Instead
  – Introspection
  – Confront the issue
  – Get help!
If...this is professional adversity

- Don’t
  - Shut down
  - Be negative
- Instead
  - Communicate
  - Identify a solution
If...you encounter big issues

- Don’t
  - Give up
  - Blame the system
- Instead
  - Ask for help
  - Break it down
  - Take small steps
Get Over It!
**Activity**

- Each notepad has a common, relatable adversity issue listed:
  1. You keep getting interrupted in meetings and your ideas aren’t being heard.
  2. You feel trapped in your job and there is no clear path upwards.
  3. Your project is thrown a week off schedule because YOU forgot to follow up on something.
  4. Your co-workers don’t seem to want to move forward. They pay your ideas lip service, but don’t take action.
- Go to the number that resonates with you.
- Discuss what someone **SHOULD** and **SHOULDN’T** do in this situation.
List of Strategies and Anti-Strategies

- **Take Action**
  - Confront the issue
  - Identify a solution

- **Be Prepared**
  - Increase preparation
  - Take small steps/break it down

- **Learn Something**
  - Plan for next time
  - Learn to anticipate
  - Introspection

- **Reframe Your Thoughts**
  - Reframe as a funny story

- **Lean on Your Relationships**
  - Communicate
  - Ask for help

- **Lashing Out**
  - Spread the blame
  - Inflict your pain on others

- **Avoiding Necessary Change**
  - Bury the problem

- **Running from the Problem**
  - Shut down

- **Cynicism**
  - Blame the system
  - Be negative

- **Serious Anti-Strategies**
  - Dissociation
  - Anxious avoidance
  - Escapism
  - Depression
Questions? Email Jeff and Amy here:

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