

# The Punch In the Face

*“Lessons on Overcoming the Inevitable Difficulties in Growth”*



“Have you ever felt like you were punched in the face by life or someone in your life? Actually . . . every one of us will feel this a number of times in our life. This white paper is devoted to helping people learn to think about the past in a different way and become skilled in learning to deal with life's setbacks.”

**First Draft - This is a very rough draft. We are still working to proof this white paper and working with the Pay It Forward co-authors to fine tune and perfect this white paper. We wanted to get something out to you right away. Please forgive things not being in final form.**

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# Punch In The Face

Version 1.10

We trust the following five areas of focus will help you and those around you to learn how to take the tough things in life and handle them in a more effective way.

**1. There will be hard times**

**2. Accountability hurts**

**3. Learning to anticipate Pain**

**4. Seeing life after impact**

**5. Creating a plan that anticipates growth through conflict**

## 1. There will be hard times

"At times the world may seem an unfriendly and sinister place, but believe that there is much more good in it than bad. All you have to do is look hard enough, and what might seem to be a series of unfortunate events may in fact be the first steps of a journey."

— Lemony Snicket

### a. What does this mean? Discussion on definitions.

"Hard times," What does this mean? It is ultimately a perspective. If a person says, "I'm on hard times," that person is identifying to the listener that something difficult is going on in their mind. We have heard stories from others that we can't think of as hard. We might even say in our own minds, "That's nothing. You should hear what I've been through." It is only a perspective. There is always someone who has more challenges. The definitions that might be explored at this point in the discussion would be a variety of paradigms.

G. K. Chesterton shares this phrase in *The Man Who was Thursday* that we might all hear if we are paying attention: "Only in the blackness before it entirely destroyed his brain he seemed to hear a distant voice saying a commonplace text that he had heard somewhere, 'Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?'" Most of us experiencing a punch in the face focus on the immediate harm we are experiencing. Our definitions at the point before we learn to control or understand the punch in the face are inward focused. We focus on these pains. They drive our responses and often those responses are illogical, irrational and not in our best interest.

### b. Identification of triggers and factors.

In order to understand our responses it is helpful to consider our triggers and the factors which propel and facilitate their engagement. Most often we can start with the first symptom: stress. If we are feeling stressed, we have probably experienced a trigger which was produced by a factor which has placed us in a "hard time" or punch in the face moment. This moment may last for a moment or trigger a lifetime of disasters. The goal is to look at the origin of the stress. It may be conflict with a family member, neighbor, business associate, an environmental factor, or any number of stress inducing factors.

### **c. Accepting that it is okay**

**The most difficult act during a punch in the face is realizing that its “okay.” By saying it’s “okay,” I’m not saying it is in fact “okay,” but there is a high probability that it is manageable or will have an ending. In track in high school my friends and I would joke after a Saturday Night Live skit, “It only hurts until the pain goes away.” This is a reality. Learning to see the punch in the face as a time period that will end helps the recipient of hard times to see that it should eventually “come to pass.”**

**Identifying that it is should come to pass is not to say that what you might be experiencing is okay. Most punches to the face are violent, unnecessary, aggressive actions of dominance or abuse. The point in finding personal acceptance or understanding of the punch is to free yourself of the dependence on the aggressor's actions. If you are free to receive the punch, there is some power taken away from the act. If the punch is anticipated, even potentially allowed, it takes the authority of the nightmare away. If the bully is identified as a bully, there will eventually be options to overcome the force of the hit.**

**Accepting or saying “okay” to the hit frees the individual to explore options, to think about what’s happening, to engage the logical reasoning process to what appears very unreasonable.**

## 2. Accountability hurts

**"Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without."**

— **Gautama Buddha**

### **a. Why does accountability hurt?**

One of the most common punches in life involves accountability. Accountability is a challenge to the individual's competence, to the individual's personal views, to the individuals believe in him or herself. If a person is caught in a perceived "lie," there is immediate resistance to the label which will follow: "Liar." No one wants to be called a liar. There is tremendous resistance to accountability because of the potential collateral damage which might follow.

However, if one has learned to accept or say okay to his or her personal life and action, that individual has already accepted accountability. The sting of finding out that a person finds your efforts lacking doesn't matter. You've already been through that punch with yourself before the outside throws it at you.

### **b. What does "It's not fair" mean?**

An indication that you aren't taking the punches well is found in statements such as "it's not fair." It's not fair means you have weighed your situation and found it wanting. You have said I am not getting the same as everyone else or the other person. "I'm not getting what's mine." This is a healthy and harmful state of mind. It is harmful at times because it shows that the person may not be seeing far into the past, present or future. Life doesn't dish it out equally. The person may not be seeing why his or her share is disproportionate. They may also not understand that the beam and the mote have two different sizes because of perspective.

It is healthy to recognize imbalances if it isn't part of a temper tantrum. If I see that my load is lighter than my neighbor's and I say, "This isn't fair." It is usually a trigger for me to engage on my neighbor's behalf to lighten the load. If I recognize that I am being mistreated and given more load by an unjust boss than my equally equipped associates, it might be a trigger to consider why I might be singled out. It may be a harbinger of worse things. Identifying imbalances as warning signs and calls to action rather than pity parties, help create proactive thoughts which protect and enable the person to prepare for a future punch or alleviate the punches others are enduring.

### **c. Explore strategies for being comfortable with accountability.**

The most difficult task for most of us is to appreciate our current state. I can't be where Bill Gates is today. I can't be where Holocaust survivors were yesterday. It can't be where my father, mother, or others have been. I'm ultimately not them. I may have surpassed them. I may be no where close. If I live within my moment and situation I often can take most of the heat off of accountability. If I can say, "I am who I am," that is a good start. I then need to recognize if I'm in error, I can change. If I am not in error, I can be diplomatic about my responses to authority while holding my ground. If I'm in doubt, I will suffer detrimentally under the blow. That's not what life's about. We are here to live. It reminds me of William Ernest Henley's poem *Invictus*. We need to allow ourselves to be the captains of our souls.

Out of the night that covers me,  
    Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
    For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
    I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
    My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
    Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
    Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
    How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
    I am the captain of my soul.

### 3. Learning to anticipate Pain

"Numbing the pain for a while will make it worse when you finally feel it."

— J.K. Rowling (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Harry Potter, #4))

#### a. Can we predict or plan for pain?

I would indicate without exception that we generally can. The question is how far out we may need to plan. An entrepreneur may live with a very high risk tolerance. The entrepreneur may consider life boring without multiple punches a week including a few bankruptcies every seven years until the big break or ultimate collapse. The expectation of pain is on the table for breakfast every day for a high risk person.

The individuals who struggle with pain are those who think they are living lives that should suffer pain. It is like the son who stayed home in the story of the Prodigal Son parable. He'd been the good son. Why would the son who blew everything and mocked his father's love be welcomed home. The son who stayed home had been the good guy. Where's his feast? Where's his ring? Where's his robe? The "good guys" are often spending the least amount of time preparing for bad times.

The goal is to say, "Am I paying attention to my life, my children, my work, my relationships, my . . ." If you aren't, you're going to take a hit shortly. This is as simple as not looking at your watch and being late for your anniversary dinner. It was a simple lapse of attention, which may have powerful meaning to the person sitting by him or herself at the dinner table.

We all must learn to pay attention and understand what it means to miss factors, triggers, and cues that may prevent future pain.

## **b. Exploration of strategies for planning**

Exploring strategies for preventing pain may seem potentially cowardly. It's not! It means that you are keeping things in order. The lack of pain in life doesn't mean there is not tension, stretching or growing. It usually means that things are broken or irreparable. We are looking to prevent terminal and painful punches. Things that cause divorce and similar relationship ruptures are terminal. Things which cause reprimands at work could be painful and eventually terminal. Having to work hard to start a new business is a positive growth punch or healthy pain. It is nice to know that it's coming and to have a realistic understanding of what it might take. Wanting to swim the English Channel may be a great idea if you are an accomplished swimmer. That is growth pain. If you are a novice, that's terminal pain. We have to understand our limits and understand what types of punches we can take.

I would first start by outlining the various factors which cause stress. I would then identify why they cause stress. What is it about them that could cause stress. What is about them which causes others stress and therefore may cause you residual stress. I would even look a bit farther out of the circle to see what economic, political, environmental factors, may exist which might trigger assaults on your system. Depending on your risk level you could become paranoid. I would encourage you to not do this. Look at yourself and gear up for the battle of life. Take it on!

## **c. Identify how planning alleviates stress/pain.**

After you have looked at your list, see if you don't feel better. You should. You know where it could come in from. You know where and when you'll need to duck. You could also just get out of the way and be no where near the punch. Planning prepares you for the ability to step out of the way or say, "I think I'll take this one." You should feel better.



## 4. Seeing life after impact

"You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."

— **Maya Angelou**

### a. Looking at worst possible scenarios

One of the challenging aspects of planning for a punch is seeing it in its darkest reality. Optimism may prevent you from saying, "it could get that bad." Look at it. Look at it as that bad. What might that bad mean. What might it mean to hit that potential bottom. Who could it affect. How could that affect you. Go there. Play with it. If you know it in its worst form, you might possibly be ready for it.

### b. What pieces are left

You won't know if your right until after it happens. The power of creation is really seen in the destruction. If you underestimated the punch, things may look pretty bleak. If you overestimated the punch, you're sitting pretty or hopefully at least in a lesser "worst case scenario." Power and personal independence will come from being open to creation at this point. See what you have. If you have enough to start, get going. If you are worse off than you could have imagined, look at the drawing board of life and restructure your priorities. Maybe the project isn't as important as you thought. What can you learn from it. What can you learn from the effects. Don't be offended. Don't be discouraged. Just look at it. You can be hurt and feel some pain, but try not to let the pain and hurt be masters over your ability to start a new.

### c. What have you really lost - what have you gained?

I like the idea of looking at reality in terms of actualities. What have I lost or gained. I have normally done both. They may not be in equal shares on the scales of reality, but they are both there. Keeping a real perspective of what's happening gives you the chance to truly see life, projects, relationships, and opportunities anew.

## 5. Creating a plan that anticipates growth through conflict

"Get going. Move forward. Aim High. Plan a takeoff. Don't just sit on the runway and hope someone will come along and push the airplane. It simply won't happen. Change your attitude and gain some altitude. Believe me, you'll love it up here."

— Donald Trump

### a. Looking at life planning from the beginning

We don't all have the resources and opportunities as Donald Trump, but we have the ability to plan and see what we do have. Before we are ever in danger of conflict, way back at the beginning, way before harm and assault, we can put it on the dry erase board, the paper, the napkin, and see what might be. Planning just before the punch isn't helpful. Preventing and or anticipating conflict from the start enables your plane to take off with the appropriate expectations. You should be less stressed and more prepared for the rigors of the journey.

### b. Discussion of business/life plans

If you have never heard of the concept of a business or a life plan, this is a great time to do some research. The most basic idea is what is my profit and loss. Look at what creates profit, what are my expenses, what is loss, what factors create profit, i.e. product, what factors trigger loss, i.e. expenses. These two concepts exist in relationships, business, sports, and all areas of life. Your goal should be thorough enough in your plans to make sure you've anticipated reality, not just the good and not just the bad. What is the most probable reality. How will it hurt?

### c. Summation: seeing how understanding and planning prevents "pain" even when it is inevitable.

Hopefully at this point in the process you can look over your life, business, relationships, and overall situation and see how things can be different. Planning for a punch in the face is power. It gives you independence. It doesn't mean life won't hurt, but you can anticipate what life looks like after it. Build on information. Build on experience. Find the resolution to begin, fail, pick yourself up and finish. Each new achievement will empower you to try again and to keep moving forward. "It only hurts until the pain goes away!"

If you have any questions on this white paper and / or how it applies specifically to your biggest challenge please feel free to connect with the individual who introduced this white paper to you or you can call toll free 888.230.2300 or outside the US 630.393.9909.

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