

When Adversity Hits, Tell Yourself a Positive Story by Jon Gordon

When tragic events like the Boston Marathon bombings happen *we have a choice* in the narrative we tell after the event. Terrorists want us to tell stories of fear, despair and hopelessness. Yet Bostonians decided to tell themselves and the world a very different narrative. They told stories of strength, resolve, courage, faith, unity and love.



This is significant because the stories you tell yourself determine how you respond to adversity and how you live your life.

When Charlie Ebersol, the producer of *The Moment on USA Network*, survived a plane crash that killed his younger brother, one of the first things his mother told him was, “You are allowed to be sad but you can’t be mad, sad. You have to make a purpose and turn this into something good.” Charlie said that this perspective changed his life. He went on to sell his company, gave up all the things he had been doing and focused only on the things he loved— which lead to him producing an inspiring television show like *The Moment*.

In television and life people get knocked down. Those who see themselves as victims stay down. But those who see themselves as heroes get back up and armed with optimism, courage and faith, they move forward and take action to create a brighter and better future.

In one of my favorite books, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*, author Donald Miller tells the story of a friend whose teenager daughter was rebelling, doing drugs and dating the wrong kind of guy. The dad decided he needed to stop yelling at his daughter and instead needed to create a different narrative for her life. He held a family meeting where he shared that they were going to raise money and build an orphanage in Mexico. At first his family thought he had lost his mind but then they all rallied behind the idea. His daughter even got excited about going to Mexico and meeting the kids there and posting pictures on her website.

A few months later when Donald Miller saw his friend again, he told Donald that everything changed for the better. His family was living a better story. His daughter even broke up with her boyfriend after he told her she was too fat. The dad said, “No girl who plays the role of a hero in her story dates a guy who uses her. She knows who she is. She just forgot for a little while.”

Those who study film making know that in every great movie the main character wants to achieve something but must overcome adversity and conflict in order to get it. And those who study life know it works the same way.

Whether you want to start a business, build a winning team, raise great kids, provide safe drinking water in Africa, help the homeless, find a cure for cancer, educate children or create a more peaceful world, adversity and conflict will be part of your story as you strive to achieve your goal.

But when adversity hits you can choose to tell yourself and the world a positive story and work passionately to create a positive outcome.

Boston taught us to tell positive stories in the face of conflict. Now it’s our turn.

-Jon

What story will you tell?