

3 WAYS TO TURN ADVERSITY INTO AN INSPIRED STATE OF MIND

Comfortable, but uncomfortable. These were the contrasting feelings I had while sitting in an impossibly inviting chair during chemotherapy, hooked up to tubes and machines that were pumping my body with life-saving radiation.

It was during these sessions, observing the courageous cancer survivors surrounding me, that a thought began to evolve. I watched fellow patients sift through and sit with their discomfort and wondered about their specific situations and stories.

Despite a shared unease, we all sought treatment from a diverse set of life circumstances. The woman next to me was back after skipping sessions because she couldn't get time off work; the man across from me had to scrounge for bus fare just to get there; catty-corner from me, a mother of three was grateful to get a sitter long enough to make the trip in.

Learning their unique narratives had a profound effect on me—for the duration of the chemotherapy and for every gratitude-filled day that has followed. I realized during those treatments that regardless of whether it's grief or joy, fear or hope, we're all in this together. I realized I wanted to help people heal.

From distress comes drive.

During treatment, I saw people trying to help their loved ones but not knowing how. After all, during times of hardship, it's extremely difficult to find the "right" thing to do or say. Friends would often send me homemade meals in giant Tupperware containers. It was a kind gesture, but I

couldn't eat it all, and then I struggled to manage washing and returning the containers.

I realized people needed a way to communicate hope and kindness to their loved ones—a sentiment that became the impetus for our company. It didn't come from any business acumen or lucrative profit model; it materialized from the human instinct and self-reliance that I'd honed while ill. That desire for healing inspired me to develop our business model that donates 10 percent of our revenue to an assortment of charities that heal our planet and protect the people and animals living on it.

This nontraditional business approach comes from the edge that adversity instilled within me. Going through my ups and downs and watching others do the same gave me the push I needed to pursue the kinds of personal and professional endeavors I'd always wanted to pursue.

Here are some additional insights I gleaned from times of personal strife that influenced and inspired our business:

1. Quiet the chaos.

In our working lives, we're surrounded by information—tasks to complete, blogs to read, people to consult. When you're facing adversity in your personal life, that noise is still there, but learn to focus differently to find that flow.

Sift out the noise and set attainable goals that help you move through adversity and connect to the most important things in your life. The big-picture items you're pushing toward can be your treatment plan, your family, or—when you're well again—your vision for bettering the world.

2. Find your center.

When you're in survival mode, life can feel completely out of your control. Everything in your orbit feels like it's in a precarious position, just moments away from veering off-kilter. That's why it's so important to incorporate achievable hobbies and actions, things that gratify you, into your daily routine.

Infuse your daily livelihood with joy and peace to find what inspires a quiet calm. Volunteer at a dog shelter; learn to code and start your own programs. Use your time to experiment with something you've never done before that brings you a sense of joy. Attaining that sense of calm can put you in the proper physical and mental space to face adversity head on and come out on the other side centered.

3. Appreciate every day.

Since overcoming cancer, I work and love with more force and more joy than ever before. In times of personal difficulty, it's easy to feel like you don't have any choices. But how you seize the day is a choice that's forever yours, so seize it with resolve and gratitude. Any milestone in life, whether it's surviving cancer or turning 50, lights a fire under you and makes you want to seize the day.

Studies show that resilience is a powerful skill in the world of work. The ability to bounce back after adversity, to rely on yourself and to use your own mental resources to survive, has been shown to lead to greater staying power and success. In fact, U.S. employers are rapidly catching on to the value of resilience and are actively training their employees in it.

Use hardships to fuel your personal and professional goals, but don't be afraid to stop and smell the roses. Assess your own efforts and those of your colleagues and put each in perspective. Reward yourself for a job well done, but recognize the work of those around you, either with kind words or other incentives. Appreciating that effort shows how far you've come from those adverse beginnings and also reveals that you still have work to do.

Despite any discomfort we might feel when it's happening, adversity can lead to appreciation, hardships can spark creativity, and grief can give way to gumption when it's all channeled into positive efforts. Moving through challenges and coming out on the other side can inspire and influence your professional life as much as your personal one.

Lee Rhodes founded glassybaby in 2001 after a chance meeting between a tealight and a hand-blown glass vessel during her seven-year bout with cancer. Rhodes developed the idea for glassybaby's one-of-a-kind votives and drinkers with the core mission of helping cancer patients she met during treatment afford basic needs such as bus fare, childcare or groceries. Ten percent of the company's entire revenue goes toward a charitable organization; to date, glassybaby has donated more than \$7 million to 350-plus nonprofits since opening its doors.