

Lapse of good judgement in life can result in an emotional wreck

"You must do the thing you think you cannot do." - Eleanor Roosevelt

As a teenager, one of my favourite haunts was the local auto salvage yard. Ed, the owner, was content to let me roam the rows of wrecks - confident that I would use my good sense and stay out of trouble.

For whatever the reason - morbid curiosity, perhaps - the serious wrecks held the greatest fascination for people. These were vehicles involved in head-on collisions, rollovers, and such - often with fatalities.

These vehicles could not be salvaged for parts, so were parked in the back of the yard for crushing. Without exception, each wreck was the result of a momentary lapse of good judgment - someone passed on a solid line, drove too fast, drove while impaired, failed to stop at an intersection, or simply did not pay attention to the road or drive for the conditions.

As I grew up, I discovered a lapse of good judgment in life could also result in a serious emotional wreck. Sometimes, the wreck had nothing do with our lack of judgment but the poor, cruel, or foolish choice of another - leaving us to deal with the aftermath.

I began to wonder why certain people could experience an emotional "head-on" and survive it while others - having endured (what seemed to me) an incident of far less emotional magnitude - were utterly destroyed.

In the mid-80s, I had the good fortune to meet John Walsh, host of North America's number one crime-fighting show, *America's Most Wanted*. His incredibly successful career, as host of a nationally televised program, and as an advocate for victim's rights, was a career Walsh never anticipated.

In the summer of 1981, Walsh was living the American dream. He and his wife, Reve, had a beautiful six-year-old son, Adam, the joy of their lives. But that joy was shattered on July 27, 1981, when Adam was abducted and later found murdered.

The question was posed to John: how were you able to rebound from such a devastating experience?

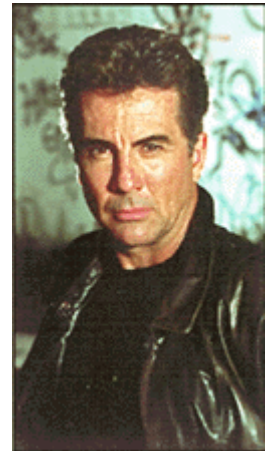
I don't recall John's exact words, but the essence of his response was this: in the midst of the anger, enormous loss, and sorrow, he realized he could still make a choice. Option Number 1: allow Adam's death to utterly destroy him and his family, thus adding another victim to the police report. Option Number 2: to honour Adam's memory by surviving.

John chose Option Number 2. Among the acknowledgements and honours conferred upon John Walsh is the one bestowed upon him by CBS *Portraits*: Walsh was chosen as one of the One Hundred Americans Who Changed History.

In the years that followed, I have come to recognize the power and importance of a simple equation: E + R = O. Event + Response = Outcome.

Events, by themselves, are not what create our feelings (the outcome). Rather, Events (what happens, what is said, etc.) plus your Response (what you say, think, imagine, and do) creates how you feel. We may have little control over an event that happens in our life. We have limited control of the outcome. We have full control over how we respond.

Understanding this equation is critical to your happiness and your survival. If you think that the events (or other people) are responsible for your feelings, you will always feel powerless and like a victim.



*Murray Fuhrer is a local self-esteem coach.
For more in formation on self-esteem,
check the Extreme Esteem website at
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