

10 IDEAS FOR HARD TIMES

The wisest, most loving, and well rounded people you have ever met are likely those who have known misery, known defeat, known



the heartbreak of losing something or someone they loved, and have found their way out of the depths of their own despair. These people have experienced many ups and downs, and have gained an appreciation, sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion,

1. Pain is part of life and love, and it helps you grow.

So many of us are afraid of ourselves, of our own truth, and our feelings most of all. We talk about how great the concepts of life



and love are, but then we hide from both every day. We hide from our truest feelings. Because the truth is life and love, sometimes hurt, and the feelings they bring disturbs us. We are taught at an early age that all pain is evil and harmful. Yet, how can we ever deal with real life and true love

if we're afraid to feel what we really feel? We need to feel pain, just as we need to feel alive and loved. Pain is meant to wake us up. Yet we try to hide our pain. Realize this. Pain is something to carry willingly, just like good sense. Because you can only learn how strong you are when being strong is the only choice you have. It's all in how you carry the things that don't go your way. That's what matters in the end. Pain is a feeling. Your feelings are a part of you – your own reality. If you feel ashamed of them, and hide them, you're letting the lies of insecurity destroy your reality. You should stand up for your right to feel pain – to endure it – to own your scars – to deal with the realities



of life and love, as you grow into the strongest, wisest, truest version of yourself.

2. Mindset is half the battle.

It's okay to have down days and tough times. Expecting life to be wonderful all the time is wanting to swim in an ocean in which waves only rise up and never come crashing down. However,



when you recognize that the rising and crashing waves are part of the exact same ocean, you are able to let go and be at peace with the reality of these ups and downs. It becomes clear that life's ups require life's downs. In other words, life isn't perfect, but it sure is good. Our goal shouldn't be to create a perfect life, but to live an imperfect life in radical amazement. To get up every morning and take a good look around in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is extraordinary and every day is a gift. Never treat life casually. To be spiritual in any way is to be amazed in every way. Do not let the pain of a situation make you hopeless. Do not let the bitterness steal your sweetness. Even though others may disagree with you, take pride in the fact that you still know the world to be a beautiful place. Change your thoughts and you change your

reality. And mindset is especially powerful when it comes to accepting that...

3. Your biggest fears don't really exist.

When times are hard it can be difficult to follow your heart and take another step, but it's a tragedy to let the lies of fear stop you. Although fear can feel overwhelming, and defeats more people than any other force in the world, it's not as powerful as it seems. Fear is only as deep as



your mind allows. You are still in control. So take control! The key is to acknowledge your fear and directly address it. Fight hard to shine the light of your words upon it. Because if you don't, if your fear becomes a wordless, obscure darkness that you avoid, and perhaps even manage to briefly forget, you open yourself to future attacks from fear when you least expect it. Because you never truly faced the opponent who defeated you. You CAN beat fear if you face it. Be courageous! And remember that courage doesn't mean you don't get afraid; courage means you don't let fear stop you from moving forward with your life.

4. You are growing through experience.

Over time you will find that life isn't necessarily any easier or harder than you thought it was going to be; it's just that the easy and the hard aren't exactly the way you had anticipated, and don't always



occur when you expect them to. This isn't a bad thing; it makes life interesting. With a positive attitude you will always be pleasantly surprised. When you stop expecting things to be a certain way, you can appreciate them for what they are. Ultimately you will realize that life's greatest gifts are rarely wrapped the way you expected. Experience is what you get when your plans don't go as planned, and experience is the most valuable commodity you own – it builds your strength. You have the power to turn your wounds and worries into wisdom; you just have to do something about them. You have to accept what has happened and use what you've learned to step forward.

5. You can't change situations you don't take responsibility for.

Sigmund Freud once said, "Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility." Don't let this be you. When you blame

FEAR NOT
Isaiah 41:10

others for what you're going through, you deny responsibility – you surrender power over that part of your life. Make no mistake, in the end, the price of happiness IS responsibility. As soon as you stop making everyone and everything else responsible for your happiness, the happier you'll be. If you're unhappy now, it's not someone else's fault.

Ultimately, your happiness depends on your self-reliance – your unshakable willingness to take responsibility for your life from this moment forward, regardless of who had a hand in making it the way it is now. It's about taking control of your present circumstances, thinking for yourself, and making a firm choice to choose differently. It's about being the hero of your life, not the victim.



6. The present is all you really have to deal with.

Life is not lived in some distant, imagined land of someday where everything is perfect. It is lived here and now, with the reality of the way things are. Yes, by all means you can work toward an idealized tomorrow. Yet to do so, you must successfully deal with the world as it is today. But the truth is, where you are now is exactly where you need to be to get to where you want to go tomorrow. So appreciate where you are. Your friends and family are too beautiful to ignore. Take a moment to remember how fortunate you are to be breathing. Take a look around, with your eyes earnestly open to the possibilities before you. Much of what you fear does not exist. Much of what you love is closer than you realize. You are just one brief thought away from understanding the blessing that is your life. Happiness is a mindset that can only be designed into the present. So many young people seem to think all their happiness awaits them in the years ahead, while so many older people believe their best moments are behind them. Don't be either of them. Don't let the past and the future steal your present.

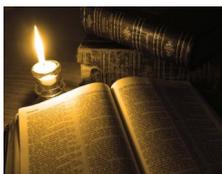
7. There is always, always, always something to be thankful for.

Life is better when you're smiling. Being positive in a negative situation is not naive; it's a sign of leadership and strength. You're doing it right when you have so much to cry and complain about, but you prefer to smile and appreciate your life instead. What if you woke up tomorrow with only the things you were thankful for today? Think of all the beauty that remains around you, see it and smile. Be thankful for all the small things in your life, because when you put them all together you will see just how significant they are. At the end of the day, it's not happiness that makes us thankful, but thankfulness that makes us happy.



8. Great things take time.

Instant results are rarely the best results. With patience, you can greatly expand your potential. If your desires were always fulfilled immediately, you would have nothing to look forward to. You would miss out on the joys of anticipation and progress. Remember, patience is not about waiting; it's the ability to keep a good attitude while working hard for what you believe in. It's the willingness to stay focused, confidently staking one small step at a time, knowing that the way you move a mountain is by moving one stone at a time. Every stone you move, no matter how small, is progress. Bottom line: You deserve more than mere instant gratification. Value that arrives in an instant is often gone in an instant. Value that takes time and commitment to create often outlives its creator – YOU.



9. Other people cannot validate you.

When we're struggling to achieve something important, sometimes we look to others to validate our progress. But the truth is, they can't... You are not in this world to live up to the expectations of others, nor should you feel that others are here to live up to yours. Pave your own unique path. What success means to each of us is totally different. Success is ultimately about spending your life happily in your own way. You don't have to be flashy to be impressive. You don't have to be famous to be significant. You just need to believe in yourself and what you wish to achieve. You can be quietly humble and still be amazingly effective. Just because people don't fall at your feet and worship you, doesn't mean you are a failure. Quiet success is just as sweet as loud, flamboyant success, and usually far more real. Success is how you define it, not what everyone else says it must be for you.



10. You are not alone.

In the midst of hard times, it's easy to look around and see a bunch of people who seem to be doing just fine. But they're not. We're all struggling in our own way. And if we could just be brave enough to open up about it, and talk to each other, we'd realize that we are not alone in feeling lost and alone. So many of us are fighting the same exact battle alongside you. We are all in this together. So no matter how embarrassed or pathetic you feel about your own situation, know that there are others out there experiencing the same emotions. When you hear yourself say, "I am all alone," it's just your worried mind trying to sell you a lie. There's always someone who can relate to you. Perhaps you can't immediately talk to them, but they are out there. If you're feeling desperate right now, hear me: I often feel and think and struggle much like you do. I care about many of the things you care about, just in my own way. And although some people do not understand us, we understand each other. YOU are not alone!



Afterthoughts

One of life's greatest gifts is the fact that life is so often difficult. Because in dealing with life's difficulties, we build invaluable strength. This strength enables us to successfully fulfill our deepest, most meaningful purposes. It is precisely because life is difficult that we are able to make it great. It is because life is difficult that we are able to rise above the difficulties. We are able to make a difference and we are able to truly matter. When times are tough, you must be tougher.



Don't pray for an easy life; pray for the strength to endure a tough one that leads to greatness.