

# It's Not What Happens to You, It's What You Do About It

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*All of us are blessed with inner strengths. It's just through circumstance, some of us have to use them more than other*

*"In the midst of winter, I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer."*

Albert Camus

Life is what you make it," some people say. But most of us don't really believe that. "If only," you might say, "If only I weren't so old. So broke. So saddled by my mortgage. If only I had less pressure in my job. A family that understands me. There's nothing I can do, Mitchell."

To which I simply say, "Look at me." My face looks like a badly made leather quilt. It has literally made children chant, "Monster, monster," as I pass by. I have no fingers. I cannot walk.

## **Fate struck twice...**

Furthermore, all of this did not happen at once. I did not have the 'luxury' of one great, grand accident to get over. First, I was burned nearly to a crisp. There is probably not one person in a billion who has endured more physical pain than I have. Then, four years later, in an entirely separate accident, I was paralyzed from the waist down. The average person might call me the unluckiest man alive.

But, what I hope to do in these articles - and in my speeches - is to teach you not to think like the average person. To show you that nothing, absolutely nothing is absolute. Your life is entirely what you decide it is. The universe starts in your head and spreads out into the world. Change what happens in your head and the universe changes.

Really. I hope to be a touchstone for people, a route to a new way of thinking. Symbols are potent. In America, the liberty bell conjures the concept of freedom in a single image. In India, the Taj Mahal shows us, at a glance, the depth and extravagance of human love. In San Francisco, my adopted hometown, the Golden Gate bridge is a testament to engineering ingenuity that speaks volumes.

What I want, is to be a symbol for you. With my scarred face, my fingerless paws, my wheelchair - and real, genuine happiness in my heart - I want to be your mental image of the power of the human mind to transcend circumstances. As I say in my speeches and my book, "It's not what happens to you, it's what you do about it."

When you feel you have met an insurmountable obstacle, I want you to think of me. And, then say to yourself, "If he can be successful, I can, too."

What kind of success are we talking about? I can rattle off my resume if you like: millionaire, Mayor, member of many boards of directors, environmental leader, media personality, political commentator, commercial pilot, international public speaker, even river-rafter and skydiver.

These may, or may not, be your measures of success, none the less, I know that whatever you want, you can achieve it-just as I have. You can because you are not that different from me, believe it or not.

I don't have any special powers, any magical gift of birth that has allowed me to create my own happiness in the face of tremendous trials. I am no stronger or smarter than the average person. I am a long way from ever being a 'saintly' guy. In fact, one of the secrets I share is that being pushy, even obnoxious, at the right times, has been crucial to my success.

The only difference between us, is that I had the good fortune to learn a few important points along the way - both before and after my injuries - that helped me immeasurably.

### **Inner strength...**

All of us are blessed with an inner strength, buried inside us somewhere. It's just that most don't get the opportunity to use it as much as I have.

I have a favorite quotation that I have thought about often and it has helped me through some tough times. I'd like to share it with you. It's from a man called, Albert Camus:

"In the midst of winter, I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer."

Isn't that beautiful?

I have a great life. You can have a great life, too!