

The blessing of bad experiences

Many people - I am one of them - often let negative experiences frustrate and discourage them for a while; they want life to be a constant series of positive experiences. Yet it is usually the painful ruptures in life that point us in the right direction and that we would not want to miss in retrospect, as the following personal example shows.

Peter Näf

My career start after graduation was bumpy and difficult. I had chosen a numbers-oriented and administrative job more out of confusion than conviction. In addition, I worked for my first employer in an environment where the tone was harsh and I felt very uncomfortable. I developed health problems and after eight months my doctor gave me a choice: «Either you quit the job or you will soon have a stomach ulcer». I gave up the job and was discouraged after this poor start to my career.

It is the evaluation of the experience that counts

Unfortunately, this one experience was not quite enough: it took me another four years in an unsuitable job, but this time in a pleasant working environment, to make me change my career strategy. In retrospect, these two painful experiences were decisive for my further career. I did a personal and professional assessment out of necessity and realised that I should choose a profession based on my talents and an environment in which I felt comfortable. This gave me the chance to learn at a young age about experiences that others sometimes only have to deal with later in their careers.

And last but not least, these experiences sensitised me to the activity that I enjoy doing today: helping people find professional satisfaction. Unfortunately, I only felt gratitude for these groundbreaking experiences much later. For many years, the feeling of failure haunted me and I blamed the experiences on myself as personal failures.

«Failures» make for good stories!

I really cannot say that I now warmly welcome negative experiences and failures. I still initially rage against the evil forces of fate and feel shamefully neglected by luck and generally treated quite unfairly when things don't go my way. But I manage more and more often, and often sooner, to look for possible opportunities and clues as to what I could change about my situation and where a rethink might be indicated.

Incidentally, it is precisely these stories that are particularly well suited to storytelling for self-marketing - if we interpret and tell them not as stories of failure but as stories of personal development. Everyone can identify with such experiences, because I have not yet met anyone who has not become wiser through all kinds of harm.

And hand on heart: would you go to the cinema to watch flawless heroines and heroes mastering their obstacle-free everyday lives with confidence and inspired by the constant wind of pure luck?

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