

A Major Disappointment

It is just before Christmas and you were asked to a party at an upmarket restaurant and while walking through the foyer you slipped on a fruit drink spilt by a staff member and broke your leg. Now in theatre circles when they tell an actor to “break a leg” they don’t mean it literally. They mean that the actor should “have a wonderfully successful night and have the audience eating out of your hand”. To break a leg literally is something quite different and a lot more painful!

The very act of breaking your leg means that you will be on crutches and possibly have to use a wheelchair for at least three months. You also know it will entail a lot of physiotherapy when you are back on your feet. In the meantime the accident means you will have to curtail many things you intended doing. For example, you intended to travel interstate to spend Christmas with your family and you had a lot of things organised with them.

You are within your rights to be very angry at the members of staff who were quite negligent, not only in spilling the drink but failing to make sure no customer went near the wet area while someone organised the clean up. Not only has it wrecked your restaurant experience, it will interfere with your life for the next 3-4 months.

How do you react? Does anger well up inside you; do you feel trapped and frustrated? Do you take out your frustration on the dog and others around you? Perhaps you think these things always happen to you and that you are always unlucky? Such reactions will only make the situation worse for you. It is like being stuck in quicksand with no way to move forward to a bank that is just out of reach.

You can spend the next 3-4 months wallowing in self-pity, thinking about what might have been and expecting everyone around you to wait on you hand and foot and generally making life difficult for others, as well as yourself, or you can change your attitude and change your life. A cheerful disposition will, for a start, make you a much nicer person to be around during a difficult time and your determination to master a burdensome situation will encourage those around you.

Dealing with a disappointment is meant to help you grow and to remind you of your priorities. You might find that it is actually fortuitous that you did not travel at Christmas and you may be able to organise a better time in the future to be with family. Perhaps there is a special birthday coming up and if you were there at Christmas you would not have been able to make the trip for a very special time later that cannot be repeated.

A broken leg may also give you a chance to be proactive. Think of the books you can read and the rest you can get. It can also give you time to finish things that have previously been put aside and not completed. You can make those phone calls and contact friends and family you have been meaning to get in touch with for months. Most importantly it can be a time when you reconnect with your family and spend much needed time in each other’s company.

When a disappointment arises, check your thoughts. Is your thinking defeatist or resolute? Are you thinking only of yourself or are you thinking of others? What are you concentrating your effort on; the disappointment or making the most of the time you have been given? When you are prepared to focus on the up-side of a difficult situation you are making a choice to say, "So what! This will pass", and stay in control of your life. When you are back on your feet again you will be able to look back and laugh about the situation and the vagaries of life.