

Finding blessings from tragedy

Spiritual Wisdom

The struggle of life is one of our greatest blessings. It makes us patient, sensitive, and Godlike. It teaches us that although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.

—Helen Keller

Sometimes tragedies actually bring out the best in people. Have you noticed how people get together and help one another so much more easily when they're in the midst of a disaster? Tragedies can bring together neighbors who had previously hardly even bothered to say hello to one another.

Tragedies and disasters have a way of shaking off many layers of illusion-based distractions to reveal a deeper awareness of the shared flame of humanity. Natural and manmade disasters, such as floods, tornados, hurricanes, terrorist bombings, and earthquakes, all bring (along with images of devastation) equally powerful portrayals of human beings helping and even heroically saving others.

Here are some ways that suffering can uplift your spirit:

- Suffering inspires humility, vulnerability, and openness.
- Suffering teaches compassion and kindness.
- Suffering brings greater appreciation and gratitude for all you have.
- Suffering guides you to contemplate and reconsider your thoughts and actions.
- Suffering encourages renunciation — an important quality for spiritual growth.
- Suffering inspires you to pray and ask for divine grace.

Many people have awakened to religion, spirituality, and the presence of God for the first time after going through traumatic events. In fact, suffering can be one of the most potent forces for spiritual transformation and awakening. I know that may not be exactly what you wanted to hear!

Be Careful

Understanding the benefits that can come from suffering shouldn't make you start courting difficulties or becoming a martyr who looks for more suffering to grow from. Nor should you just suffer on and on without making efforts to heal the problems in your life. In fact, with spiritual awareness, you can remove unnecessary discomforts not only through outer efforts, but also by combining the power of your mind with spiritual practices, good actions, and higher intentions.

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Wise words about the trials of life

Great teachers from many traditions have pointed out how valuable life's trials can be for one who is seeking to grow from them. Here are a few of their views on this topic:

"Tragedy is like a strong acid — it dissolves away all but the very gold of truth."

—D.H. Lawrence

"Sorrow makes a man think of God."

—Ramana Maharshi

"Suffering is not an evil, it is the consequence and nearly always the remedy of evil."

—Eliphas Levi

"The soul that is without suffering does not feel the need of knowing the ultimate cause of the universe."

—Anandamayi Ma

"Love your suffering. Do not resist it, do not flee from it. Give yourself to it. It is only your aversion that hurts, nothing else."

—Hermann Hesse

"Never to suffer would have been never to have been blessed."

—Edgar Allan Poe