

Don't be a Victim

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To me, a victim is someone who has endured the pain of life but continually dwells on their negative experiences, often believing their injuries to be worse than all others. I have personally endured car accidents, chronic medical problems, the deaths of friends and family, a decade of depression, and years of physical and emotional abuse, yet I consider myself neither a victim nor a survivor. I consider myself someone who has lived life, an experience that Thomas Hobbes correctly described as nasty, brutish, and short, although I would add that it can be beautiful at the same time.

No one escapes life unscarred; yet there are those who insist on reminding everyone how much they have been wronged in the past. However, it is hard to quantify pain. Who can say whether one loss or injury is worse than the next, especially when life contains an excess of pain and injustice?

It is true things that have happened to us in the past leave scars, and sometimes, as in my experience, those scars take years to overcome. But once those scars are there it is useless to continue to dwell on them. We should not harbor ill will against those who have wronged us in the past. We should encourage them to realize those actions were wrong, just as we must realize when our own actions are harmful and wrong.

In no way am I excusing behavior that is hurtful to others. But once that pain has been caused, what is the point of compounding it by dwelling on the injury for the rest of our lives? Often times we have no control over the things that happen to us, but we do have control over the way we react to it.

Victimization is an overreaction to events that have harmed us, and it does nothing but perpetuate the harm by dwelling on those events, preventing us from proposing reasonable solutions to the root problems by clouding our judgment with negative emotions, which often times leads to disproportionate retribution.

Because life is short, we should accept the nasty and brutish parts so we can also embrace the beautiful aspects of life. I have too much to look forward to to dwell on something that happened eight or ten years ago, and I suspect that we all have too much at stake in the present to continually worry about what happened in the past.

Victims do not accomplish great things; they are accomplished by strong men and women who accept hardship and overcome it in order to forge a better life.