

A WEEK IN *Learning*

WHY WE NEED OBSTACLES TO KEEP US GROUNDED

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Gravity is a natural force that pulls mass and energy toward one another. It is what keeps us on Earth and what keeps all planets in orbit around the sun. In life, we encounter another great force pulling us down: obstacles. A man sitting under an apple tree may not have been involved in its discovery, but obstacles exist in our everyday life. More often than not, we consider them a pain. However, a switch in perspective can show us that they actually keep us grounded. I want to take some time to outline three different, positive outcomes that can result from this switch.

Creativity

Some obstacles arrive with such force, that it seems like there is no easy way around them. Because of this, it may take some creative problem solving skills to end in a solution. We tend to have a negative outlook on some of our hurdles, but try to think of them as an opportunity to get creative. Many people get inspired and end up forming a great solution. Take the invention of bifocal glasses, for example. This invention was a direct cause from the hassle of continually having to switch glasses.

Benjamin Franklin was not only famous for wearing them, but it is known that he was the brains behind the invention as well. Here are some ways to help you get a little more creative when faced with an obstacle:

- **GET A DIFFERENT OPINION.** Sometimes, we lack the motivation to think outside the box when challenges arise. Take the time to collaborate and brainstorm with someone else. They may give insight that sparks your creativity!
- **SURROUND YOURSELF IN A DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT.** It is difficult to attempt a new solution in the very same spot that caused the obstacle in the first place. Seek out a fresh, new environment!



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Reality Check

At times, the obstacles we encounter are thought of as limitations. They come across as challenges expected to limit us to one path. Think of the last time you caged yourself in with a limitation of yours. Perhaps you wanted to take on a triathlon, but knew you were not so great at swimming. You set that as your limitation, and used it as an excuse to not go through with it. We view these as a stopping point. However, this does not have to be true. Our limitations can be a reality check for us, and send us on a path of growth. Invest in yourself, and view this as an opportunity to challenge your limits. Here are a couple ways to turn our limitations into a reality check:

- **WRITE DOWN YOUR LIMITATION.** Jot down why you think you cannot reach your goal. Is it *truly* a limitation? If so, what are some small milestones you can create for yourself to build towards your goal?
- **GET COMFORTABLE WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.** You will only be able to grow in one area if you challenge yourself to do something that makes you uncomfortable.

Forward Thinking

Lastly, our obstacles can remind us to better prepare. It is important to use past obstacles as a form of forward thinking. Reflecting on these while planning events, projects, or even trips, can help set ourselves up for success. If it wasn't something you faced previously, it is smart to prepare for hurdles that could still hinder your plans. Here are two common challenges that arise in everyday life, and how you can prepare for them:

- **TRAFFIC.** Aside from leaving early, make a habit of listening to the news, or checking reports on your phone right when you wake up.
- **LEAVING SOMETHING IMPORTANT BEHIND.** Making lists may seem like a daunting task to some, but writing out important items you need for the day can be helpful. In the moment, write out all of what you need. Try to physically walk through your list as you place down each thing. If you can, place them all in one central location – somewhere near your exit!

I was raised to say, “Where there is a **will**, there is a **way**”. Personally, if I did not face obstacles with an open mind and a positive outlook, I would have never progressed the way I have. I challenge you to think a little outside the box, challenge your limitations, and prepare yourself for even the smallest hurdles. Our obstacles aren't pulling us down – they are keeping us grounded.