

Sue Thompson's

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WALK ON

Oscar Hammerstein II understood the essential elements of perseverance. As he penned the words for the songs of "Carousel," he wrote simply and eloquently of this important character strength:

When you walk through a storm
Keep your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark.
At the end of the storm
Is a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Tho' your dreams be tossed and blown.

Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone,
You'll never walk alone.

A little syrupy? Perhaps. But it's pretty much all you need to know: keep walking.

Look, I know some of you are going through some of the hardest trials you've ever encountered. You've been out of work for a long time. You may be struggling with whether or not to give up your house. You may have to move in with relatives or friends. Your kids may be sick, your heart broken, or your finances depleted.

But whether you are simply trying to stay on track to reach a goal, or you're climbing the Alps of personal and emotional challenges, perseverance, according to the [VIA Institute on Character](#), "involves the mustering of your will in the face of contrary impulses." It is

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“persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles. “

I prefer to be practical, so let me point out the obvious: the end of the storm doesn't always bring a golden sky or the song of lark, and you may be making this journey all alone. (It was a Broadway musical, after all.) Sometimes, there are actually good reasons for letting go of the struggle, particularly if it is imperative for your sanity, your marriage, or your reputation.

But that doesn't mean that you should view this period as a worthless, nothing, no-good-can-come-of-it tribulation. The life experiences we negotiate—the white water rapids we endure, the marathons we run—build something in us. It's almost indefinable, but you know what I'm talking about. After a tough battle with cancer, we find we are more appreciative of life. After a job loss and a long haul to the next position, we're deeply grateful for what we have, even if it wasn't what we had. And we're not as scared. We found out that in digging deep, we found something within us we didn't know existed.

Perseverance is endurance. It's holding your position on a boat in the perfect storm. It's feeling that intense desire to give up but nevertheless holding on to that last thread of intestinal fortitude and standing with your last ounce of strength. It's tying yourself to the mast and saying, “If I die here, so be it.” And it doesn't even have to be that dramatic. Look at perseverance as the trainer that makes you strong and resilient and able to put things in perspective. I remember when I went back to school at night for my Bachelor's and Master's degrees. I thought, “Good Lord, it's going to take five years.” That was daunting. And then I thought, “Yes, but in five years, five years will have passed, and I'll be done.” So why not? The time is going to pass anyway. It should pass with me having some sort of result I can be proud of. And after that five years, I've still got decades of life to live. I mean, even if I decide to get a PhD and I'm 65 when I obtain it, I'll still use it for at least thirty years.

Turn up the volume on the music that gives you the most hope and press on, friend. After my book, *The Prodigal Brother: Making Peace with Your Parents, Your Past, and the Wayward One in Your Family* was published, a woman wrote me. Because

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the book is about my drug-addicted and alcoholic brother and the chaos that was my family life for many, many years, she related her trials with her own son. She ended her email with this comment: "I have a tree that is about 10 inches in diameter by my driveway that was injured by my son one day as he took out his anger with a baseball bat. It should have died, but instead it has healed over its many scars and is beginning to flourish again. That tree is me."

The end of the road may be a flourishing new you. Walk on. *



Fall seven times, stand up eight.

Japanese Proverb

If one dream should fall and break into a thousand pieces, never be afraid to pick one of those pieces up and begin again.

Flavia Weedn

It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer.

Albert Einstein

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YOUR CHARACTER IS SHOWING

Join me for my monthly teleseminar in which I interview interesting people about their character

Next Character Teleseminar: Wednesday, April 25, 6:00 p.m.

My next teleseminar on character strengths will be with the accomplished and busy Stormy Friday, a veteran in the facility management field and a highly sought-after consultant. Stormy is the president of The Friday Group and provides management, facility management, and marketing consulting for scores of firms. Her clients have included numerous government institutions such as NASA's Goddard Space Center, educational institutions such as Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and top-notch companies like Siemens and Nationwide Insurance. She's a superior public speaker and has authored a number of professional books—and children's books, too! Sign up now and listen in as we discuss her strengths and how they've been instrumental in her life choices!

Click [here](#) to sign-up. It's free.

About Sue

Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

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