**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Homeroom**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Finding Silver Linings[[1]](#footnote-1) in Adversity**

**Directions:** This passage is from *The Happiness Advantage[[2]](#footnote-2)* by Shawn Achor. It’s a book about how being happy makes your life better.

“After crisis or adversity[[3]](#footnote-3), there are three mental paths. One that keeps circling around where you currently are (i.e., the negative event creates no change; you end where you start). Another mental path leads you toward further negative consequences (i.e., you are far worse off after the negative event). And the **Third Path**, which leads us from failure to a place where we are even stronger and more capable than we were before. To be sure, finding that path in challenging times isn’t easy. In fact, when we feel helpless and hopeless, we stop believing such a path even exists and don’t even bother to look for it. But this path is the one we should be looking for… Our ability to find it is the difference between feeling crippled by failure and rising above it.”

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Let’s consider an example of what Achor is writing about. Imagine that your classmate does really badly on a math test. If she chose the Third Path, she might realize that she hadn’t studied correctly, and that she should quiz herself more and ask more questions in class to make sure she understood. She still did poorly on the test but suddenly she is doing things that will make her a better student in the long run. She found ways to let adversity make her stronger. In other words, she found the third path.

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| **Stop and Jot**1. In your own words, define the “Third Path.”

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**Finding Silver Linings in Adversity (Continued)**

Achor continues:

“Study after study shows that if we are able to conceive[[4]](#footnote-4) of a failure as an opportunity for growth, we are all the more likely to experience that growth. Conversely, if we conceive of a fall as the worst thing in the world, it becomes just that. By … rejecting the belief that every down in life leads us only further downward, we give ourselves the greatest power possible: the ability to move up not despite the setbacks, but because of them.”

Achor then reflects on instances where the challenges helped make them even stronger:

“A psychologist named Richard Tedeschi has made the study of growth after adversity, which is called ‘**Adversarial Growth**’ (or growth after adversity) --his mission. He wants to know why, after some terrible train bombings at a train station in Madrid, Spain, for example, psychologists found many people had become happier and psychologically stronger. Or why so many women diagnosed with breast cancer showed increases in compassion for others, openness, and even, eventually, overall life satisfaction. In other words, after a terrible experience, many people report increased personal strength and self-confidence, as well as a heightened appreciation for—and a greater closeness in—their social relationships.

Of course, this isn’t true for everybody, but it’s worth asking ‘why?’ What distinguishes the people who find growth in these experiences from those who don’t? Not surprisingly, mindset takes center stage. People’s ability to find the path up rests largely on how they look at their situation. The strategies that most often lead to positive growth after adversity include optimism, acceptance, and the ability to positively reinterpret the situation or event.”

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| **Stop and Jot**1. What is growth after adversity? Why doesn’t it happen to everyone?

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**Finding Silver Linings in Adversity (Continued)**

One way to help ourselves see the path from adversity to happiness, Achor writes, is to practice something called the ABCs model:

**Adversity** is the negative event that occurred and that we can’t change.

**Belief** is our reaction to the event; why we thought it happened and what we think it means for the future. Is it a problem that is only temporary and local in nature or do we think it is permanent and pervasive? Are there ready solutions, or do we think it is unsolvable?

**Challenging It** involves first telling ourselves that our belief is just that—a belief, not fact—and then challenging it. What is the evidence for this belief? Would we let a friend get away with such reasoning?

And finally, if the adversity truly is bad, is it as bad as we first thought?

This particular method is called **Seeing It Another Way:** taking time to show ourselves that while the adversity is real, it is perhaps not as bad or catastrophic as we may have made it out to be. That may sound like a positive platitude stripped off of a Hallmark card, but the idea that things are never as bad as they seem is actually a fact based on our fundamental biology. Because thousands of years of evolution have made us so remarkably good at adapting to even the most extreme life circumstances, adversity never hits us quite as hard—or for quite as long—as we think it might.

***Practicing Your ABCs***

**Directions**: Complete the table below to reflect on a challenging event you faced in school or at home and how you can use it to become stronger and wiser.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Adversity:** The challenging event or situation that I faced in my life | **Belief**: What I believe this situation or event means for me now and for my future.  | **Challenging It:** Critically evaluate my assumptions, interpretations, and evidence I use to come to support my beliefs | **Seeing it Another Way:** Acknowledge that while the adversity is real, it’s probably not as catastrophic or negative as I imagine |
| *What happened that made this event or situation challenging?* | *Why did it happen? What do I believe it means for my future?* | *What is the evidence for this belief? Is it really strong? Are there other (more positive) ways to interpret what happened?*  | *Will the negative outcomes be temporary or permanent? Will the outcome(s) be as negative as I fear? Wil lit/has it helped me develop personal strengths or prepared me for future challenges?* |
|  |  |  |  |

**Stamp Your Learning for *Finding Silver Linings in Adversity***

**Directions:** Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Imagine that your friend is facing some personal challenges. You tell him about the power of gratitude, but he responds: *“You know now is not the time. I don’t have anything to be grateful for. Looking for the positive is just going to make me feel worse.”*

What could you say to persuade him that gratitude and looking for silver linings might actually help?

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1. In one artful sentence, describe a challenge you faced that made you stronger or wiser. Use the term “adverserial growth” in your response.

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1. Identify another challenging situation you have recently faced in school or at home. Name two things you will do to find the silver lining in that experience.

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1. **silver lining:** something good that can be found in a bad situation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Excerpted and adapted from *The Happiness Advantage* by Shawn Achor (pages 98-100) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **adversity**: a difficult situation or condition

4 “Silver lining” by Sekan Simasanti (Royalty-free stock photo ID: 744010750) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 5 **conceive**: to think of something [↑](#footnote-ref-4)