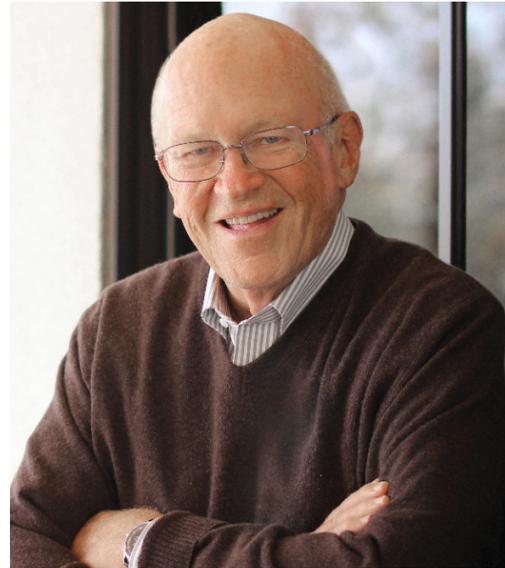


Five principles to apply when problems arise

Learning how to be a great leader starts with learning how to accept and move on from failure, says American author **Ken Blanchard**



If you've ever faced a business failure, a health crisis, a broken relationship, or any other life dilemma, you know how easy it can be to let negativity pull you down into self-doubt and helplessness.

Life puts us into situations that challenge us – and working on those challenges stretches us. In fact, the toughest dilemmas often provide the biggest opportunities for growth. While we may know this intellectually, this knowledge provides cold comfort when we're in the middle of a difficult challenge.

When problems arise, I find it useful to apply the wisdom I gleaned from Norman Vincent Peale, my late co-author of *The Power of Ethical Management*. In that book we introduced the five core principles of ethical decision making. These same five principles also can be applied to dealing with problems – no matter how hard those problems may seem.

1 Reflect on your purpose
When you are faced with a setback, reviewing your purpose can help get you back on track. Your purpose will be inherently motivating, because it's the ideal toward which you are striving. Unlike a goal, which has a beginning and an end, a purpose is ongoing. It's your reason for existence and answers the question 'Why?'

Let's say you just had a career setback. If you obsess about the missed goal – a lost contract or job – you'll be discouraged. If you focus on your purpose, you'll redirect your attention to the person you want to be in the world and the life you want to lead.

2 Tap into your pride
Pride sometimes gets a bad rap. After all, they say it's what comes before a fall. And if you've taken a fall, you may be feeling anything but pride. My definition of pride isn't having a big ego. Rather, it's the healthy self-esteem of people who aim high but know they're human and make mistakes. Pride is essential if we're going to have the strength to get up, move forward, and fulfill our purpose. As Ben Franklin quoted in his *Poor Richard's Almanack* way back in 1740, "It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright." So, don't be afraid to tap into your pride!

3 Exercise patience
Life unfolds on God's timetable, not ours. If you ever saw *Oh, God!* you might remember that in the movie John Denver asks God (played by George Burns): "Did you really create the world in six days and rest on the seventh?" God replies, "Yes, I did, but you'll have to remember, my days are a little longer than yours. When I got up this morning, Freud was in medical school."

Once I learned to be patient and trust the timing of a higher power, I noticed that things began to work out for me. When you have patience, you realise that there may be a good reason why things turned out the way they did.

It's important to develop the capacity to accept or tolerate the delays and suffering that are inevitable in life. If you are making your best effort and doing the right thing – even if things look tough in the short run – your efforts will pay off in the long run.

4 Apply persistence
Of course, you can't just sit back and do nothing; patience without persistence is not sufficient to fulfil your purpose. Once you've processed your feelings about a setback and dusted yourself off, it's time to continue working toward your goals and

commitments. I agree with Calvin Coolidge, who said, "Nothing can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with great talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

5 Get some perspective
Perspective is the capacity to see what is really important in any given situation. To do that, you need to get some distance from your problem. As my wife, Margie, puts it, you need to take the helicopter view of your life. When you stand two feet from a mirror, you will see the slightest imperfection – and suddenly that imperfection becomes a huge deal. But if you view your life from a helicopter, you see the big picture and the little things take on far less significance.

I've written extensively on how to maintain perspective by starting your day slowly.

Perhaps your knee-jerk reaction to that statement is, "But I need more time to start my day slowly!" You have the same time we all do – a 24-hour day. Suppose you're playing chess and your opponent says, "Checkmate!" You're cornered; the game is over. You can't say, "I want more board!" Yet that's what you're asking for when you say you need more time.

Taking time to reflect gives us the perspective we need to listen for guidance from within. When we do that, our purpose comes into focus and we're able to make wise choices moving forward.

The next time you're faced with a big challenge, try reflecting on your *purpose*, tapping into your *pride*, exercising *patience*, applying *persistence*, and getting *perspective*. You may not get instant answers to the problem you're facing, but I guarantee you'll grow from it.

Working on challenges stretches us. The toughest dilemmas often provide the biggest opportunities for growth

DETAILS

Ken Blanchard is co-founder and chief spiritual officer of The Ken Blanchard Companies and the co-author of *The One Minute Manager*, as well as 65 other books with combined sales of more than 21 million copies. Visit kenblanchard.com

Man of influence
For more than 40 years, Ken Blanchard has informed the day-to-day management and leadership of people and companies throughout the world