[Gold Dog Consulting](http://www.golddogconsulting.com/) blog with Cindy Hooker

**“Focus on Strengths to Overcome Adversity”**

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What does adversity mean to you? Maybe it’s an embarrassing moment that is crystal clear in your mind. Or the feeling of being told you weren’t “good enough,” and the powerful wave of determination to prove them wrong.

My first job after college was at a law firm, helping clients navigate the jumbled maze of immigration. I could see plenty of ways to improve our process but was told to be quiet “like the rest of the office girls.” When I submitted a request to take paralegal courses, my manager responded “What good would that do?” I had just married the man of my dreams, but what should have been the happiest time of my life had turned into a nightmare. One day, my boss told me that I “probably wasn’t a good fit anymore” and released me from the job. I felt both relieved and nervous: What should I do next?

All of us possess an amazing gift: the privilege of choice. We can choose to develop gratitude, positivity, and joy. When facing challenges, we can grow and develop our talents like a strong and deeply rooted tree. Or we can focus on negativity and feed the monsters of fear, jealousy, and anger:

* Fear of doing something wrong, or of being rejected
* Jealousy that others have what we want, or want to be
* Anger because life has handed us a big ol’ pile of lemons

When faced with adversity, many people give up. It’s easier to follow the path of least resistance than to go through the pain of—fill in the blank—ever again. Let me tell you, after experiencing home birth, moving 6 times in four years, and starting my own company, I am not afraid to face my fears. Difficult experiences can be excruciating. But we are capable of forgetting all the suffering once the beauty shines through. Like a mother forgets the pain of birth once that precious baby is snuggled in her arms. Or the missed flight that results in a serendipitous friendship. Or the new job opportunity that only arrives once we’re freed from the old one.

So after finding myself unemployed, I started exploring. It was freeing to discover the world as endless possibilities. Later, I discovered that this curiosity comes from my strengths – areas of talent that come to each of us naturally. For me, that’s a combination of thinking outside the box, seeing what “could be,” and setting (and achieving) huge goals. No wonder my first job was such a bad fit! It wasn’t feeding my primary strengths. Knowing and applying my strengths has helped me to create a satisfying business. Instead of feeling stuck, I’m confident and excited to see what each day will bring.

A quote by Alexander Graham Bell perfectly describes the struggle of adversity. “When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.” Despite challenges, I’ve decided to focus on my strengths. Are you willing to see where the next door will open?