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There are times when it visits all of us and it has a profound effect when it does. Often times suffering comes into our home like a long lost relative and stays much longer than we would like.

Suffering is a worldwide part of our humanity. We all have sufferings invasion into what we thought was our safe little corner of the world. When suffering encroaches into our lives it upsets our applecart because suffering activates many human emotions things like anger, fear, and sadness.

Suffering comes in all degrees of intensity, from mild to intolerable. Attitudes toward suffering may vary widely, in the sufferer or other people, according to how much it is regarded as avoidable or unavoidable, useful or useless, deserved or undeserved.

Although we do not like it, I would like to think about suffering as something that can help us so that we can live a life of sanity and hope instead discouragement, despair, and uselessness for the patient and also the family of the terminally ill.

You may ask what profit can come to me from this illness. This dreaded illness that ties me down and obliges me to give up all the good things I was doing and hoped and planned to do. What advantage can I expect from this ruin of my life, a ruin that leaves me sick in bed, desperate and hopeless? It is true that sudden great misfortune may appear to overwhelm you and not allow you the opportunity of profiting by it.

We all know people who have been made much meaner and more irritable and more intolerable to live with by suffering. On the other hand we probably know others who suffer quietly as they try to remain optimistic and exhibit kindness to those who serve them in their pain

Suffering asks many questions such as; Why did my baby son die? He didn't hurt anyone. Why was my innocent daughter killed by a drunken driver when she was in the prime of her life? Why did I get cancer because I never smoked. Why do I have to suffer physically and financially and have to buy a new car when it was the other driver who crossed the yellow line, not me. Why, why, why do I have to suffer so much physical, mental and emotional pain? It is not fair. I hate it and I am sick of its invading my life so rudely.

It certainly can be difficult to accept some of the sorrowful twists and turns that life brings our way. And there are few things that can stir the human soul more than the news of a terminal illness diagnosis.

I would like for you to consider what I think of as, lessons to be learned at the “University of Hard Knocks.” The first this is remember these words written in big letters over the entrance gate of this unique university. Trials are intended not to provoke us but to prove us.

Suffice it to say, no matter the reason why we have trials, the fact of the matter is that these trials do exist and we have to deal with them and hopefully learn during the process

Robert Browning Hamilton expressed this thought so wonderfully in verse:

I walked a mile with Pleasure  
She chatted all the way,  
But left me none the wiser  
For all she had to say.  
I walked a mile with Sorrow  
And ne'er a word said she;  
But oh, the things I learned from her  
When Sorrow walked with me!

While we may not like our walk with sorrow and suffering, there are things that we can use to give us hope for those painful troubling times. The fact is, during times of adversity, we have opportunity to learn things about ourselves we might not learn in any other way.

Following are some things that you might want to think through. For the person who wants to leave their mark on this world the lessons from suffering are several.

Pain and suffering can help us to learn important lessons in life. The score of the latest ball game or ladies tea is of little importance when a person is engulfed in pain and suffering, facing the uncertainty of death and even further suffering  
Suffering can mature you. Suffering can make you a better person. Suffering can separate out what is important from what is unimportant in your life. Suffering can make you see what is real and what is unreal. For some folks coming from religious backgrounds suffering can draw them closer to God, a wonderful source of hope and help, each day.

Suffering and hardship can make us more compassionate and kind. Most intelligent, thinking people who have suffered just about anything--whether it's the sudden loss of a job or the death of a loved one to a serious illness--feel more compassion for people who have endured similar experiences. In other words, Pain and suffering can help us to comfort others who are going through similar pain. Dr. J. H. Jowett reminds us God does not comfort us to make us comfortable only, but to make us comforters.

Pain and suffering can also test us to show what we are made of. It is easy when another person is in the crucible of refinement as gold but when we enter that fiery furnace how

quickly our feet of clay burn off and expose what is underneath. The real us, who we like to keep hidden especially if it allows others to see that we have some major weak points.

Pain and suffering can also prevent us from becoming dangerously proud. One author gives us food for thought as we face suffering and its impact on others as well as ourselves

Don't aspire to be like the gilded weather vane on top of a great building. However much it may glitter, however high it may be, it adds nothing to the firmness of the structure. Rather, be like an old stone block hidden in the foundations, under the ground where no one can see you. Because of you, the house will not fall.

What a way to end a life for the terminally ill person. To leave a legacy of loving help to those around us

However, all these good things growing out of suffering only happen when a person takes charge of their suffering. The darkness in your life or the darkness of suffering can do good things for you only if you take charge of the suffering and take charge of your life.

However, the darkness in your life does not want you to take charge anything. The darkness wants you to give up, to live without hope, to let life unravel before your eyes, and to let the suffering of your life bring chaos and unending discontent.

When it comes to handling suffering and adversity and making it your servant I would remind you of these 10 little words for taking control; if it is to be it is up to me.

Yes dear suffering friend we have enormous difficulty trying to make sense of the darkness and find meaning in the darkness because the darkness is just that...darkness. In the darkness there is no illumination and no enlightenment.

Without illumination and enlightenment, there is no way to become more mature or better. Without illumination or enlightenment, we will not be able to separate the important from the unimportant. Without illumination or enlightenment, we will not be able to differentiate between what is real and what is unreal.

The goal is to use our real suffering not let it destroy us. Lets think a moment about the benefits of suffering

At the end of a particular season of pain and suffering, disappointment and discouragement you may have a deeper gratitude for simple blessings. When we lose one blessing, another is often most unexpectedly given in its place. Always then look at what you have left. Never look at what you have lost.

For example, the loss of our ability to walk and being bed ridden can be offset by the blessing of being able to see the tears of our loved ones as they look at us in our pain. then there is the

simple blessing of being able to hear their joy at being given the chance to do all they can to help us in our suffering. The simple blessing of being able to feel the touch of their hand on your fevered brow. The blessing that can come from a period of suffering may be simple but they are precious

Rebecca Williams offers these words of encouragement for troubled times.

One ship drives east, and another drives west  
While the self-same breezes blow;  
It's the set of the sails and not the gales  
That bids them where to go.

Like the sails of the seas are the ways of our wills  
As we voyage along through life  
It's the set of the soul that decides the goal  
And not the storms or the strife.

How about that reminder for the next time you or your family go through the valley of suffering

A final word of hope in times of suffering is as follows; Sometimes the Lord may calm the storm around you, but more often He'll calm the storm within you.

If you have any questions, you can find out more about our program in Cortland County NY by calling Caring Community Hospice of Cortland 607-753-9105 or visiting [www.cortlandhospice.org](http://www.cortlandhospice.org) (See our Web Link Page)