

# Courage, Fortitude and Resilience

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

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It is a common experience that at least once in our lives everything seems to collapse around us. And we are left desperate. It may be failure to get the qualifications we need to do the work we have set our heart on. Or indeed the loss of work we love. It may be the collapse of a relationship we have become so dependent on. Or the death of someone close. It may be an illness that demands a radical change in our lives. Our first reaction is one of shock and disbelief. And as the reality of the situation looms through, the feeling of utter desolation. The future seems bleak. Hopeless. This is a crucial moment. We can either descend into the hell of depression and even suicide or into purgatory where we begin the process of rehabilitation. The suffering involved in purgatory is equal to hell, but for the change of attitude. We have reinstated a reason for living, a meaning for life. This takes courage. For our first task will be to ask why such a catastrophe has happened. It may be for reasons beyond our control; it may be the outer circumstances of the economy; it may be that the other has been unfaithful; it may be the nature of the body to fall ill. In such cases, there can only be acceptance and the turning into oneself to work with the emotional and mental reaction. And to explore potential. However, if it was a case of overconfidence, of being very much part of the cause for the ending of a relationship, of carelessly putting the body into a dangerous situation, then a deep trawling of our attitudes needs to be undertaken. This takes patience, fortitude and perseverance – resilience. The situation may demand a completely new change of direction in our lives. It may call for continuing as we were, but with a very different attitude. It may mean a radical acceptance of a situation that cannot be altered. Once this decision has been made, no matter how dimly we see the potential outcome, we are on the road to rehabilitation. In many such cases, there is also a spiritual awakening. For in the misery, there also arises the question as to the purpose of life. Such occasions may also happen in our spiritual lives. In fact, I would say it has to happen to some degree or other. The world view we hold is, according to the Buddha, a delusion. When we come face to face with that delusion, it is bound to cause a disruption. And that dis-location can be as painful as any mundane one. There may be the sense of groundlessness and bewilderment, yet the inner conviction, no matter how dim, supported by the writings, experience and example of others, gives us the courage to commit and the determination to persist. In the Buddha's own darkest hour when Mara generated in him the Great Doubt – Who am I after all to seek the end of suffering? He had to ground himself. And the Earth Goddess rose to remind him that that his task was not just for his own benefit but for the benefit of all. And that he had perfected the virtue of generosity and so had the virtuous power to complete the task. Rooted to his seat beneath the Bodhi Tree, after six hours, came the insight into the end of all suffering, the direct experience of Nibbana. There is an end to suffering, to all unsatisfactoriness. It is our destination. Our only real destination.

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