

5 ways to thrive in challenging times

Tess Challis



**Sometimes
life can be
really
fricking
tough.**

Sometimes it feels like the world is in chaos, and you have no idea how life will ever be good again. Will it ever be good again? How could it be good again? What if it's not? What if it just gets worse? These are some of the thoughts that our mind can spiral into, and keep us in a state of fear-based thinking. We watch the news, we hear scary things, and our own lives can feel like they're in upheaval. To survive, let alone thrive, can feel impossible during times like this.

But what if the “worst” times actually provide the best opportunity to create profound change? I'm going to say something very controversial here, but I trust that if you're reading this, you can handle it. You seem smart like that, so here goes: The worst situations ARE our greatest opportunities. They are never NOT blessings, even though they're disguised as experiences that seem scary and unpleasant.

I have yet to have a “horrible” experience, or go through some sort of unpleasant challenge, without there being an incredible gift waiting on the other side. I've had all kinds of “bad” experiences throughout my life—two divorces,

extreme poverty and homelessness, chronic illness, obesity, emotionally abusive relationships, and times when I didn't know where my next meal would come from. But were they bad? I don't think so. Not once did a hard experience fail to deliver a deeply beautiful blessing that made me feel it was all worth it.

This has taught me to know—not just believe—that life is fundamentally good. That the Universe is benevolent. That abundance is infinite, and that our experiences exist for our benefit. Things aren't happening TO us, they're happening FOR us. I know this might sound a bit far-fetched, but I invite you to keep an open mind while you check out my five tips below. What if they could actually work some magic in your life?

1

Unconditional Gratitude May Surprise You!

Here's a counterintuitive tip that works so well that it often gets overlooked for its simplicity. But let me tell you, it DOES work! If you can learn to give thanks for the “bad” stuff that happens, in addition to the good stuff, life will begin to change right before your eyes. I know this sounds a little dramatic and woo-woo, but what if I'm right? What if all your challenges really are happening for your benefit, as gifts from the Universe to wake you up, and all that needs to happen is a shift in your perspective?

Imagine a small child is deathly ill, and her mother has to force her to take bitter medicine every day that will make her well. If that child focuses on the bad-tasting medicine and curses her mother for forcing it on her, she completely misses the point. If she took the medicine with grace and gratitude, she'd get well quickly and be able to go about her life in good health.

Sometimes our higher power has to give us “bitter medicine” when we’re out of alignment in some way. But never does that medicine fail to have a higher, benign purpose. If we suspend our doubts and give thanks for ALL of our experiences, everything opens up and we align with a much more light and joyful way of life.

Every experience has something in it for us. SOME thing. Even if you can’t imagine what could possibly be good about what you’re going through right now, try giving thanks for it. And no, giving thanks won’t invite more unpleasanties to you, so please don’t worry about that! It will simply align you with the lessons and gifts that the experience has to offer. *And bonus!* When you make a habit of being grateful for ALL of your experiences, you don’t need to have those unpleasant ones nearly as often, if ever. Negative patterns stop repeating when we wake up to the reasons behind them. Life is here to nourish us, so don’t be fooled by things that seem like problems. What if you could give up the idea that problems even exist at all? Radical, right?

2

Focus on what you CAN control.

Sometimes I catch myself feeling stressed about things I have zero control over. I'll be in a good mood, click on my Twitter app, and then without fail, my happy vibes begin to drop exponentially after I look at enough bad news. (Side note: This is why I've worked to streamline my social media feeds so that they're enriching, not depleting). I recently decided to delete Twitter from my phone after realizing I'd spent 45 minutes "doomscrolling" one day. This term, I've recently learned, is when you scroll the internet, looking at one negative news story after another. We often do this with good intentions—it's important to stay informed and be a caring citizen of the world, right? But unfortunately, what often happens is that the bad news leaves us feeling paralyzed and depressed. Give yourself permission to walk away from things you can't control, and give your attention to more constructive pursuits.

3

Begin a Meditation Practice —however small.

Oh my, am I ever thankful for my meditation practice!

It's something I've been doing for well over two decades now, and I literally don't go a day without it. Meditation takes some work, but I promise it's more than worth the effort. It has a way of making everything else in your life easier, lighter, and more joyful. I've found that many people say they've tried meditation, but "failed." They couldn't get their minds to quiet down, so they gave up. This always makes me chuckle, because even after 25 years of doing daily meditation, I still have times when my mind won't shut up! It's like saying "Yeah, I tried yoga, but I gave up because my body needed to stretch more."

If you're new to meditation, I have a few tips for you. First of all, be sure to start small. Begin with a truly doable amount of time you can stick with. For example, can you do five minutes before breakfast every day—or even one minute? If you start with a VERY attainable goal, you can always build on it once it becomes a habit.

It's also helpful to have a special spot for meditation that feels appealing to you. Ideally, find a comfortable chair somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed. And no, you don't have to sit in an uncomfortable lotus position to meditate! It's better to be comfy enough to forget about your body, so that you're not distracted by it and can more easily focus within.

As far as meditation techniques, there are many great ones to start with. Find one that works well for you to begin with, and know that you can always experiment as you go. The main thing is to set aside the time (making it the same time every day if possible), breathe and relax, and allow your mind to unwind. Begin to be the observer of your thoughts, rather than the unconscious victim of them, and your whole life will change.

4

“One Degree” your life.

There’s a fortune I once got from a Chinese restaurant that says “IT only gets better when YOU get better.” That fortune is still on my nightstand because it’s a daily reminder that our outer lives change when we make positive changes in ourselves.

However, we often feel too overwhelmed to make those changes, because it feels like there’s such a huge gap between where we are now and where we want to go—and we don’t know HOW to do it.

This is where my “One Degree” coaching philosophy comes in very handy! Rather than staying stuck in that feeling of overwhelm, and not moving forward because of it, why not make tiny positive changes that add up to BIG changes over time?

Let’s say your goal is to be a successful entrepreneur. Perhaps you feel you’re the farthest thing from that, and have no idea where to begin. Your feeling of overwhelm can keep you stuck, and in a state of paralysis. We’re also often afraid of doing things wrong, which doesn’t exactly help us create forward

momentum! Fear of making mistakes can keep us stuck, and unable to take action.

But if you just move forward imperfectly, and take consistent, small, doable steps every day, they WILL add up. Give yourself permission to get it wrong. Give yourself permission to “fail.” The most successful people aren’t the ones who never fail—they’re actually the ones who fail a lot, learn from their failures, and keep going with the knowledge you can only get FROM failure! Literally, the ONLY way to fail is to just give up. If you keep going, you have NOT failed. You’re just in process, like the rest of us.

So, take those small steps, one at a time. That’s all that’s necessary. Ask yourself: “What’s something I can *realistically* do, that will create forward momentum in my life? What are the actions I can begin to take that represent progress, not perfection?” Acknowledge where you are now, and just take small steps to move in the direction you want to go—it WILL create momentum. Make those steps doable, stick-with-able, and appealing, and you’ve done something profound to shift your life.

I mean, imagine what could happen if you just made one small positive change every day over the course of the next year? Those small changes would add up, BIG TIME. You’d have made 365 positive pivots in just one year! In fact, even if you had five bad days, that would still be a whopping 360 positive changes!

And if you think of small positive steps as “degrees” of change, then in just one year, you’d make “360 degrees” of change! You’d come full circle—you’d still be you, but the upleveled version of you. And the momentum those small changes create, and the

growing feeling of success you'd build on? Oh yeah, now we're talking!

Incidentally, my coaching business is built on the deceptively simple power of these One Degree pivots, and it brings me immense joy to help my clients customize small (yet powerful) daily steps so they can *actively* achieve their goals. Be sure to reach out if you want to chat about that!

5

Give yourself permission to thrive

Even in the most challenging, chaotic times, you absolutely CAN thrive on every level and live a life of overflowing happiness.

Oh hey, what's that? Did that statement bring up feelings of resistance and/or guilt for you? For many of us sensitive souls, we tend to feel like it's not OK to be happy, abundant, and free when others are suffering. Like the bumper sticker says, "No one is free while others are oppressed." Well, the problem with that is, people will *always* be suffering. Are you really serving others at your highest capacity by restricting your own freedom and dimming your light? Or would you be a greater gift to the world if you allowed yourself to be happy, and helped others from a place of joy and clarity?

It's OK to thrive, even in the worst of times. And don't forget—times aren't really worse now than they were in the past. They just can SEEM worse because we're so overexposed to social media and news. For example, when someone does something racist and horrible, it's often splashed all over our screens. But in the grand scheme of things, racism has gotten better over time, not worse. Fifty years ago, we would have seen even worse

things happening in the world---they just weren't as easily viewable from our phones and tablets. Life has a way of evolving for the greater good, but if we don't LET ourselves be happy, we'll continue to stand in our own way.

So give yourself a break. Give yourself a gift. Give yourself PERMISSION to be happy, to thrive, and really enjoy your life--and let that be an unconditional gift of love for yourself. What might this open up for you if you did? And what larger scale might you be able to serve on, if you were thriving and shining your beautiful bright light for others?

Thanks so much for spending time with me,

and reading these five suggestions, my friend. I deeply hope you've gotten some value from them! Please feel free to connect with me online, or reach out if you want to have a chat about potentially working together. May you begin to thrive, more and more and MORE—even in the hardest of circumstances. Namaste.

With love and appreciation,

Tess