

WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER

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Dear friend,

We are the strong, the brave, the courageous, the non-petty, the magnanimous, the protector of the weak, and the uplifter of souls and spirits.

1. I love poison

That which doesn't kill you makes you stronger— as Nietzsche once said should be our motto.

Consider, the strong are STRENGTHENED by poison, stress, and difficulty and pain— not made weakened by it.

For example, there is a process called hormesis (not to be confused with homeopathy, which is a pseudo-science) in which a small dose of a poison can make us stronger and more immune to the poison. For example, allergy therapy works this way — a small exposure to the allergen over a long period of time, in small incremental increases of dosage, until you have built full immunity against it (this is what Cindy has been doing for many years, with great success).

The same happens with “post traumatic growth”. I myself have gone through traumatic experiences as a child (physically and mentally abusive father towards my mom, dealing with fear of bankruptcy and poverty, etc)— yet, I was fortunate enough to make it out of there a stronger, more stoic, hard, and resilient person.

2. We need pain and difficulty to grow stronger

This is my personal formula:

Difficulty + stress + luck (opportunity and support) = Strength

We cannot grow stronger without difficulty, stress, or challenge. Yet, if we do not have luck on our side, or the right opportunities, the right social structure, the right supportive people, or the right culture... we will perish.

I, ERIC KIM, have had a lot of luck, support, and opportunity in my life. I was born at the right place, at the right time. I was blessed to be born in America, which cultivated my individual thinking, opportunity, and also had a lot of great role models and mentors to guide me through the tumultuous seas of life. Without someone guiding me through life, my little ship would have certainly perished in the dark sea.

I had lightposts, buoys, lighthouses, helpful guides, the North Star, and the encouraging voices of the muses that pushed me forward. Now that I'm one of the lucky few who have "made it" in the world— it is now my duty to give back, to share what I've learned, to pay it forward, and to empower others weaker or less fortunate than me.

3. How can I use this to my benefit?

In life, whenever something shitty happens, I always try to look for the upside— or how I can exploit that opportunity to my personal benefit.

For example, I get my laptop stolen. I ask myself, "I wonder is this a blessing in disguise? Can I perhaps do my work on my phone or iPad (I can) — and perhaps can I end up being *less* distracted on my laptop? I got my laptop stolen in Paris a few years back, and nowadays, I do most of my writing and reading on an iPad (even these words are being written on an iPad, in the iA writer app, as I'm standing, using the split keyboard function).

When a business deal doesn't go through, I wonder to myself: "Perhaps that opportunity wasn't the best for me. Perhaps I can find a better opportunity, or pave the path for myself." Kind of like how JAY Z built Tidal, instead of just letting Spotify stream his music. Perhaps instead of trying to get "signed" by some big label or publisher, you can become YOUR OWN label or publisher. This is what Cindy did when she made HAPTIC— she made her own publishing company, which has given us more profits, income, freedom, and flexibility in our life.

4. The harder, the better.

In photography, the more you shoot difficult subject matter, and the more trouble you get into, the better. You can never become a fearless photographer if you've never been shoved, kicked, threatened, or yelled at by a stranger on the streets. The first time you encounter trouble in the streets, it will shake you and stir you up. But the more it happens, the harder your skin forms. And eventually, you build LAYERS of tough hide, golden mail, and bronze armor which covers your body. Then petty and small little nails cannot penetrate your adamantine cuirass.

5. Don't be petty

I personally have a rule:

Don't be petty.

It was my New Years resolution a few years back, which I've kept pretty well. It means, whenever something happens, or something Cindy says which bugs me, I ask myself,

Before I respond, am I going to say something petty?

If the answer is yes, I shut my mouth and put on my bronze Stoic armor. I patiently take on the blows, and think and meditate:

"Perhaps I'm in the wrong. I need to go on a walk, and think about what I did or said. I might be right, I might be wrong, but before I say something that I cannot take back... let me meditate and marinate this idea or thought for at least one day."

99.9% of the time, whatever petty ideas or angers in my mind came about were dumb.

Waiting for 24 hours before you do or say something while you're angry is good advice.

6. You're strong.

To live like a stoic is a much more noble, epic, and fun way to live.

Rather than cowering from pain, you don't avoid it. Rather, you see difficulty and pain as a STIMULUS for you to get stronger.

For example, I only take cold showers because it wakes me up, it stimulates my nerves and is equivalent to taking a triple shot of espresso in the morning, especially during the winter time. When the winter comes around I try to under-dress, and let myself go slightly colder than I would like to. I feel my goosebumps grow, yet, I feel my skin building a protective covering against the cold. I try not to be a typical Californian who must put on his sweater whenever even a little bit of cold comes out.

I think with food and nutrition—it is the poison which makes us stronger, more active, and more vigorous.

I am a coffee addict. Caffeine in coffee is a poison, to ward off pests and prey. Fortunately for us (big) human beings, the poison in coffee (caffeine) just gives us a little buzz. Therefore, it is the poison of coffee which makes it so great. Coffee stimulates my mind, encourages me to write, to explore, to shoot pictures, and to create. Of course, too much poison will kill you— therefore I try to limit my coffee consumption only during the day. In the evenings, I stick to hot cocoa (100% cacao, no sugar) or sometimes matcha green tea (still caffeinated, but less intense).

7. Turn poison into lemonade

So friend, whenever shit hits the fan in your life, ask yourself:

“How can I turn this shitty situation into a positive one?”

Rather than complaining, how can we use pain and difficulty as a stimulus to grow, get stronger, and evolve?

You got this.

BE STRONG, ERIC