

Thinking Beyond

Author: Karl Ballard

When I turned 22 years old, I felt like my life needed a restart. We live in an era where movie franchises are constantly rebooted, so why can't we restart our lives. Movie studios look at those franchises and see where they went wrong, and by starting fresh, they can make a good movie that can spin off into sequels and beyond. Why can't we do the same with our own lives? We can also do a self-analysis and see what is wrong or right in our life and then see how we can improve things. Sometimes, we all even require a fresh start. We can take the good and improve on it while starting out fresh. So, on my 22nd birthday, I made a clear and concise decision to restart my life. What was important for me to analyze was the negativity in my life that was bringing me down. The negativity consisted of my ego, materialism (greed), jealousy, fear, worry, care, insecurity, and all other negative emotions that I had been feeling. Once I removed all these emotions from my life and personality, I felt like a rebooted movie franchise too. I felt like a new man. It felt like I was born again. Most people use the "born again" phrase for a religious reawakening or a spiritual reawakening, but I am using this phrase for a more personal reawakening that perhaps encompasses all that and more. These things are important because what we realize is that we are the ones who bring ourselves down. Having a fresh start in life is great, but we need to analyze what is not needed in this fresh start. You have to feel like a baby. You have to learn to discover new things as you've never done them before. You look at similar experiences in a new way. Your mindset and outlook in life have to be different and a whole lot more positive. It is important to think positively. It is important to know that now you will make a difference in your life and, in turn, others around you. To be honest, our insecurities are our greatest enemy, and almost all times, they create differences between ourselves and our loved ones, or rather those that matter to us. Once we get rid of those and other negative emotions, we

feel renewed and refreshed. Our insecurities and fears will get us down and block us from moving ahead, and it's important we realize that we are bigger and better than that. We can't let them slow us down in the pursuit of our own immaterial happiness.

I wanted to think beyond my ego, insecurities, and other negative emotions. I felt it was important to rise above all this negativity to become a newer person. I also realized a few things. Most importantly, I was able to see the world and my own self a lot more closely than ever before and perform a much better self-analysis. I was able to humble myself and break free of all the mental and emotional shackles that had chained me forever. These negative emotions I speak of are like colored lenses. When we have, for example, ego, we look at everything in life through those colored lenses. We look at the world and form opinions and interpretations of everything inside it through those lenses. It forms our worldview, and that can, unfortunately, be an unclear worldview. The worst thing we do is that every action and interaction we do in the world is derived from that worldview. We impact not just us but those around us with our actions and interactions. Even worse is the life decisions we make based on this worldview we have developed for ourselves. Those decisions become disasters and have long-standing consequences that impact us all our lives. We have to live with the choices we make, and a bad decision can't be reversed in the same way a good decision can't be. A few long-term consequences are bad relationships and life failures. You feel uneasy, and not at peace at all with yourselves. You feel unhappy, and you increase and attract more negativity. Once it goes downhill, it keeps going downhill, leading to depression. That's not the state anyone of us wants to be in at all. Being in a state of depression is one of the lowest lows we can put ourselves in. We become super negative, and those negative emotions I have mentioned above increase ten-fold. When we reach this state where we've simply almost given up on life, we can do two things.

We can lift ourselves up by shedding the emotions and going through a restart, or we can choose to end things, and no one wants to go there. Suicidal tendencies are common in people suffering from such massive depression, which is why a restart is essential before reaching that

state of mind. What I am explaining to you is a chain of events that negative emotions can create for us. In summary, these simply shape our worldview as they are akin to colored lenses, and we see our life through those lenses. Our decisions shape up our lives, and these decisions are derived from that worldview. The results can be disastrous for us, our loved ones, and everyone around us. We tend to ignore and overlook the impact of our decisions on our loved ones. To be honest, these are the ones that matter more than anyone else in the world. Having said that, every human being matters, but our loved ones feel more impacted by our negative and positive decisions than others.

Most importantly, we can totally lose ourselves in the process. That's when we find ourselves in this never-ending bottomless pit of negativity. It's a vicious cycle that we find ourselves in, and it's not great at all. The worst part is that we can't climb back up, and even when we can, it takes a lot out of us. Clearly, none of us want to be in that position at all. It's the worst of the worst, and to reach that point is only going to lead to self-destruction.

So, for example, when we do find ourselves sinking in the bottomless pit I mentioned above, we would tend to ask ourselves what's going wrong in our lives and what bad decisions I have made. Then we also try to find solutions to the problems posed by the impact of the decisions. There's one extremely fatal error we're making, and that is what we need to figure out. The answer is right in front of us, and it's very simple. We still have our colored lenses on! Even while we're doing our self-analysis, we are still doing it based on the worldview that we have acquired from the colored lenses. That's a huge hindrance for us because we keep looking for the answers inside of us. How could we look for those answers with the ego-tinted lenses that have formed our worldview? It's not fair to us either because we will not be able to judge ourselves accurately with those lenses. It's sad but true, but these are like shackles that have bound us, and we need to break free from them, which leads me to my first step.

The first step here is to remove those lenses, just like I did on my 22nd birthday. Believe me, when I tell you this, it isn't easy at all, but once you do take them off, everything will suddenly

get clear. You need to tell yourself this time and time again that no matter how much of a deep hole you end up in, you can't tell yourself there's no turning back. Yes, you can't reverse time or turn back the clock or undo your past mistakes, but you can shape your future. It's absolutely never too late to restart yourself. Once you remove those lenses, you will see yourself making better and positive decisions in life. The success and happiness you seek will eventually follow. You will have to work towards it, but at least you'll be making the efforts in the right direction. You see, it's not just positive thinking but its positive thinking without those negativity-tinted lenses on. While it may sound a bit confusing, it makes sense: with those glasses on, you'll be comprehending positives, negatively. This is why positive thinking will only end up helping you make the bad decisions you've been making because the lenses are still on. It will be something akin to a false sense of positivity and self-inflicted delusion. The kind of positive thinking I have practiced and preaching is one with no strings attached whatsoever. It's positive thinking with a fresh perspective and the one we all need to have. Not only that, but we also need to encourage others to have that kind of positive thinking, too, once we have mastered it ourselves. Positive thinking is an art form. It's not easy to learn or master, but once you with patience and hard work, it makes a huge difference in your life. It adds to your mental health as well and keeps you away from self-induced depression. Depression is dangerous as it can lead to alcohol and substance abuse. You get addicted to dangerous drugs and go down a path of self-destruction that you can't return from at all. You will find yourself lost and confused, and there will be a consistent feeling of hopelessness that will devour your entire mind. Positive thinking that is completely pure, untouched, and uninfluenced can help you stay away from depression and self-destructive behavior.

Here's one thing I need for you to understand very clearly. There are no shortcuts in life, and you have to work towards it. Some things will come easy and more natural to you, and some won't. For example, removing the colored lenses that I've talked about above in detail is one of those difficult tasks. Having said that, it's also about having the right mentality and approach to

problems. Nothing, in reality, is easy or hard. It's totally what you make of it. The best part is that it is all possible and achievable. If you want something bad enough, you will work towards it and get it. I can insert tons of quotes from underdog movies saying the same thing, but the essence is true in all of them: work towards your goals and stay focused; you'll get there in due course. One particular series of dialogs spoken by Rocky Balboa, as played by Sylvester Stallone, in the 2006 blockbuster hit "Rocky Balboa," said to his son, is perhaps one of the best and most impactful lines ever spoken in cinema. It goes as follows: "Let me tell you something you already know. The world ain't all sunshine and rainbows. It's a very mean and nasty place, and I don't care how tough you are, it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life. But it ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done! Now, if you know what you're worth, then go out and get what you're worth, but you gotta be willing to take the hits and not pointing fingers saying you ain't where you wanna be because of him, or her, or anybody. Cowards do that and that ain't you. You're better than that!" The message from Rocky completely evokes positive thinking, and it's the kind of message we need to tell ourselves each and every day. It's the kind of message that will keep us going against all the odds no matter what. This is what will keep us away from depression and self-destruction. It will allow us to analyze ourselves and seek the change within ourselves. It will allow us to evaluate ourselves without any strings attached as I did. It's important to realize that change starts from within. When the King of Pop Michael Jackson said, "I'm asking (the man in the mirror) to change his ways," he meant the same thing. We can't change the world without changing ourselves. It's about freeing ourselves from all kinds of negative emotions and looking at ourselves and the world as we are looking at it for the first time in our lives. We need to forget about the past and see that the present is now and the future is tomorrow. We need to think beyond all negative emotions that are holding us captive and not letting us go. We need to break free from those shackles. We need to stop blaming others, like

Rocky said, and see what's wrong in ourselves before asking others to change. It all starts from a simple, yet deep, self-analysis. Then, we can start to look at the world with unblinded eyes. It's like looking at ourselves and our world for the first time, just like a baby that opens its eyes for the very first time.