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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Teaching and Learning in the Face of Adversity*.

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INTRODUCTION

Adversity is all around us. It is central to the human experience to encounter challenges and barriers in our daily lives. Some of these challenges are relatively minor; others are significant, life-changing events. This book is not about changing the fact that educators, students, and families encounter adversity; rather, it is about our ability as educators to empower ourselves, our colleagues, and our students to elevate the way in which we respond to adversity.

Truth be told, we might wish these adversities away, and it would be great to have fewer challenges in our lives. But we are reminded of Maya Angelou's advice: "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."

It seems that some amount of adversity is helpful and allows us to grow and develop. After all, as we may have heard, "adversity is one of life's great teachers." Be assured, we are not suggesting that educators or students simply accept the range of adversities in their lives and suffer. When taken too far,

resilience “may focus individuals on impossible goals and make them unnecessarily tolerant of unpleasant or counterproductive circumstances” (Chamorro-Premuzic & Lusk, 2017, para. 10).

Instead, this book is realistic and applicable. It addresses the ways in which we respond to the range of challenges—adversities—that arise as we do our work. There are healthy and not-so-healthy ways to respond to these events and situations. And there are skills we can develop and help our students to cultivate to elevate our ability to respond to adversity. We can reduce the negative impact of these adversities as well as enhance our learning and create opportunities from the challenges, obstacles, or even traumatic experiences we face.

In fact, there is a proficiency range when it comes to addressing adversity. Humans have a wide range of intelligences, and these develop with experience and learning. We are not talking about the multiple intelligences movement, which mistakenly suggested that learning experiences should align with one type of intelligence such as linguistic or musical. Rather, we are thinking about quotients that represent different clusters of behavior that can be learned. In a *Forbes* magazine article, Dennison (2022) notes that there are several different quotients that can be considered:

- ▶ **Intelligence Quotient (IQ):** The ability to recognize and solve problems
- ▶ **Emotional Quotient (EQ):** Measures emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and emotional self-control
- ▶ **Adversity Quotient (AQ):** The ability to face and overcome adverse situations
- ▶ **Social Quotient (SQ):** Determines cultural fit and social awareness
- ▶ **Cognitive Quotient (CQ):** How one utilizes their intelligence

Importantly, these are demonstrated in the ways humans display behavior, their communication styles, the talents they cultivate, and how they approach projects and problems. The word choice *quotient* is important, as it means the degree or amount of some characteristic. In other words, at a given time an individual may have more or less of one of these characteristics. And these are influenced by culture, experiences, and opportunities.

Unfortunately, these models can be misused. For example, in history there was a mistaken belief that intelligence could be easily measured using a test and the scores used to label and sort people (e.g., Terman, 1916). In fact, some experts believed that the results of these tests could be used to predict the future success of the individual, and thus classes were organized for children based on their scores on these assessments.

Having said that, psychologists still recognize that humans have intelligence and have attempted to quantify it, now recognizing that scores on these types of assessments reflect the experiences that the learner has had rather than their future success. We also recognize that “thinking should be measured by an intelligence test and knowing by an achievement test” (Naglieri, 2020). Further, it’s important to separate the concept of intelligence from other areas of human development.

We introduce the idea of various quotients to underscore the fact that these are not fixed areas of performance, but rather continue to grow and develop across our lifetimes. In this book, our focus is on adversity and the ways in which we can elevate our own adversity quotient and that of our students. It concerns a collection of behaviors that allow us to respond when we encounter barriers, frustrations, setbacks, and unpleasant events in our lives.

As Stoltz (1997) proposed, the adversity quotient is a person’s ability to face situations, problems, and obstacles in life and

contains four components: control, ownership, reach, and endurance (see Figure i.1).

i.1 Components of the Adversity Quotient

AQ
ENHANCEMENT
SKILLS | **CORE**
QUESTIONS

When working through adversity, ask:

- C** **CONTROL**
What facets of this situation can I/we potentially influence?
- O** **OWNERSHIP**
Where and how can I/we step up to get the most immediate traction?
- R** **REACH**
What can I/we do to minimize the potential downside, and maximize the upside?
- E** **ENDURANCE**
How can I/we get past this as quickly as possible?

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substantial, and subsequently transformative. Cornel West (Samuel, 2020) suggested, “Hope is not only a virtue; it is also a verb.” Hope can play a vital role in developing and cultivating one’s capacity to adapt and persist through adversity. Moreover, as a verb, “hope” transcends an expectation or desire for a specific action to occur and serves as a motivational impetus for attaining a goal, striving for growth, or finding purpose in life and in learning. In fact, according to a revealing study, *hope*, defined as a “multidimensional positive motivational state,” can impact academic functioning and student well-being. Within their study, Bryce et al. (2019) suggest that “cognitive hope, which encompasses motivation and approach to goal attainment, and behavioral hope, which includes regulation for goal attainment, both play critical roles in promoting youths’ academic functioning and life outcomes.”

This applicable concept of hope is also reflected in the title of an article in the *Journal of Research in Personality*: “Hope uniquely predicts objective academic achievement above intelligence, personality, and previous academic achievement” (Day et al., 2010). Furthermore, scientists have discovered that not only does hope reside in the medial orbital frontal cortex of the brain, but as a result, it can act to mediate anxiety by increasing endorphins (Ratner, 2019). We know that when students feel anxious or stressed, their ability to learn can be inhibited. As educators, we ignite hope in the lives of our students when we create the valuable pedagogical link that connects ongoing meaningful instruction and engaged learning to desired life outcomes. We understand that hope must be tangible and requires that we have goals and develop agency, self-efficacy, and resiliency. As such, hope is inexplicably connected to elevating one’s adversity quotient.

Stoltz has developed an Adversity Quotient assessment to help people understand how they respond to adversity and thus help people increase the ability to handle difficulties.

It's focused more on business, but you can get a sense of the types of questions that are used to identify each of the four components of your adversity quotient (<https://smallbusinessmattersonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Adversity-Quotient.pdf>).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK?

Every one of the adults who functions as an educator faces adversity, as does every student. Consider the prayer for serenity by Reinhold Niebuhr: *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Thus, the goals of this book:

- ▶ To help you understand and accept things you cannot change, but to do so in ways that nourish your well-being and that of your students.
- ▶ To provide awareness of thoughts, words, and behaviors within your sphere of influence and sphere of concern so you do not waste time focused on situations beyond your control.
- ▶ To develop skills in the way you respond to adverse experiences, including courage to change situations and understand your role in that change.
- ▶ To empower you with strategies to foster your students' abilities to effectively respond to adversity.

With these goals in mind, we aim to remind you through the content of this book that, as educators, we are igniters of hope! Our students, our students' families, and our colleagues need us to serve in this role now, more than ever before. Therefore, it is imperative that we face our trials, both those we've come to expect and those that appear out of nowhere and shake us to our core, with *hope*. As such, we will pursue our goals for this book through the lens of igniting hope.

We will share ideas, anecdotes, and strategies that are within your realm of control, will nourish your well-being, engage your students, and foster positive and productive relationships.

Furthermore, know that we believe in the concept of *all teach, all learn*. Regardless of the role we serve within our school community—teacher, paraprofessional, school counselor, educational leader, bus driver, or any other role—we all have lessons to teach, and we all have something to learn, especially in the face of adversity. Consider, too, that our student learners can be our best teachers.

Finally, the contents of this book are timeless and meant to meet educators in the moment, especially in the midst of challenges or uncertainty. Global pandemics may occur once in a lifetime, challenging educational mandates may come and go, but adversity is a genuine and consistent experience—a certain companion in life. Former First Lady Michelle Obama (2011) shared this wisdom at a keynote address in South Africa: “You may not always have a comfortable life, and you will not always be able to solve all of the world’s problems at once, but don’t ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.”

As you embark on the journey that is this book, we invite you, as our readers and fellow educators, to participate—to read, learn, reflect, and share. In doing so, we are confident you will gain the awareness, knowledge, and skills to ignite hope, nourish well-being, and engage students in a quest to elevate your adversity quotient and that of your students!