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### Make the best of every situation

It is ironic that we should have to seek these nuggets of wisdom from people who have experienced great tragedy

By Carole Spiers, Special to Gulf News  
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It is not only because of the recession that resiliency is a theme that has figured large in my empowerment agenda, and not many seminars or conference speeches come to an end without some reference to this quality so essential to overcoming human adversity.

Someone who specialises in this topic is liable to become somewhat blasé about the often inspiring stories of resiliency that come to public notice. So I was surprised to find myself so deeply moved by the extraordinary case of the world's shortest man, who died recently in the middle of a promotional tour.

The 21-year-old Chinese man called He Pingping suffered from a bone deformity that inhibited normal growth, and at 73 centimetres, he qualified officially in the Guinness Book of World Records as the shortest adult male able to walk.

But he was able to do a lot more than walk. He had travelled the world and captured the imagination of huge audiences with his cheek and charm. I saw a clip of a recent TV interview with him and was forcibly struck by his positive outlook. While lamenting the tragic brevity of his life, I was able to see that he had risen above the limitations of his daily existence not only by commercialising his unusual status (or exploiting his limits, as I urge others to do), but by wholeheartedly relishing what time-span he did have left. The twinkle in the eye said it all. This tiny man was absolutely not going to be defeated by the deal he had been given in life.

At that moment, a familiar phrase occurred to me. Unlike so many stressed-out management executives whom I have counselled, the diminutive He Pingping had found time to 'smell the roses'.

#### Optimist

'Smelling the roses' is a phrase we use in England (a country much identified with that flower) to indicate a simple pleasure that costs nothing, but which many people deny themselves by ensuring they are busy 24/7, but for no good reason. It is a phrase I often use in my various courses on Time Management.

Recently in Oman, I used that phrase during a presentation to the top team of a family business, before I realised that it might not mean much in the Gulf region. But they responded to it keenly, understood exactly what I meant by it, and some of them actually wrote to me afterwards to say they were determined to make time to 'smell the roses'!

#### Motivational speaker

Another confirmed optimist who had learned to exploit his limits was my American friend, W. Mitchell, who had suffered 65 per cent burns in a plane crash and was sentenced to life in a wheelchair from that time onwards.

Instead of feeling bitter, he learned to be a motivational speaker often from the same platform as myself, from where I have observed the mesmeric effect he has on audiences, worldwide. "It's not what happens to you. It's what you do about it," he tells his audiences. "Unexpected changes can become exciting new starting points." Simple words, but the philosophy is quite unarguable, and it has sustained him for many years.

It is ironic that we should have to seek these nuggets of wisdom from people who have experienced great tragedy. But if we learn to keep their optimistic philosophies in mind, we can attain the same positive mindset, while still living healthy and happy lives.

#### **Agree? Disagree?**

Readers' comments are a realistic mirror of opinion. Let yours be represented here — where it belongs.

We should note the resiliency of the dwarf who knew both he and his life, were short  
Finding time to 'smell the roses' is a vital part of Time Management  
Ironically, we can learn optimism from those who have known tragedy

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