

Staying optimistic during hard times

Dr. Nutavoot Pongsiri

Assistant Governor

Bank of Thailand

The easiest thing most people do when facing situations that are downright unpleasant, is to start complaining.

However, successful people react differently. They keep thinking optimistically and are active in searching for exits. Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said: "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." In the 20th century, no leader served with greater moral courage and clarity than Winston Churchill. He led the British people and maintained a sense of optimism, despite the German air force's mass bomber attacks during the period known as the Battle of Britain. As a war-time prime minister, Churchill committed himself and the nation to an all-out war until victory was achieved. His great eloquence, energy, and unbeatable fortitude made him an icon and an inspirational leader.

During the first three months of the Battle of Britain, the British Air Force lost 792 planes and more than 500 pilots were killed. London was bombed for 76 consecutive nights. More than 1 million houses were destroyed or damaged, and more than 20,000 civilians were killed. Over a quarter of London's population left the city while more than 150,000 people took to using the London Underground for temporary shelters and sleeping through the night until the following morning. However, the bombing did not achieve its intended goals of demoralising the British people into surrender. One of the major contributions was Churchill's ability to inspire the people to greater effort by making public broadcasts on significant occasions. He was a tireless source of strength to people suffering the attack. Thailand has been facing one of the most severe floods in its history, which has affected almost 2 million people and has left more than 600 dead. Many provinces, including Bangkok's outer suburbs, have been inundated for long periods. The current flood situation in Thailand has some similarities to the merciless bombing campaign against London during World War II. Thousands of people have fled Bangkok as the flooding spread but most

people residing in the flooded areas were instructed to evacuate and stay in designated emergency shelters. A basic question to ask is how those people can get through these tough times like the Londoners did in their period. This massive flooding is a test of their strength.

Tough times usually lower our morale and tell us that things are not going to get better easily. It's obvious that those impacted by the recent flooding will not be recovering anytime soon. But one of the best ways to overcome these difficulties is to stay optimistic, search for inspiration, and then find a possible way out. Without manifesting a positive attitude, we will become a victim of circumstances and situations.

All of us get inspired by different things and people. Inspiration can work wonders and change our thoughts in a minute. If a leader like Churchill does not exist to make us mentally strong, we need to believe in ourselves. This is the most important part in building up optimism. We need to keep telling ourselves that we can turn the bad to good and remain focused on what really matters. We can then build our future the way we want to.

Going through tough times requires lots of courage. We need to start with positive thinking, always stand up for what we believe in, and stay upbeat and confident, even if we have to stand alone. Facing a difficulty with an optimistic spirit is an opportunity for life to gain meaning and grow.

Dr. Nutavoot Pongsiri is assistant governor at the Bank of Thailand. Follow his articles in Hi! Managers every second Friday of the month.

The views expressed here are the author's own.

Published in the Nation Website on Friday, December 09, 2011