

# Turn a Weakness into a Strength



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# Introduction

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- Many people have a weakness of some sort:
  - Perhaps a disability
  - Perhaps a lack of skill
- What can you do with a weakness you have?
  - You could use it as an excuse to not try to succeed. Or...
  - You could find a way to turn the weakness into a strength
- This chapter provides some examples of people who turned a weakness into a strength

# Jamie Oliver

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- Jamie Oliver is a celebrity chef in England
  - He suffers from dyslexia
  - How could he turn that disability into a benefit?
- Some people with dyslexia find ways to express themselves that do not involve reading or writing
  - For example, through art or physical movement
- Jamie uses a lot of body movement when communicating:
  - This makes him work well in front of a camera
  - In fact, this helped him get his initial contract to be a TV chef
- A TV chef needs to write recipe books:
  - Jamie dictates his recipe books (9 so far) into a tape recorder and gets somebody else to type them
  - Dictation is probably a faster way to write than typing or pen-and-paper

# Bruce Jenner

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- Bruce Jenner won a gold medal in the 1976 Olympics in the decathlon
  - He has dyslexia
- For Bruce, the difficulty of reading taught him to work hard to achieve goals
  - “If I wasn’t dyslexic, I probably wouldn’t have won the Games. If I had been a better reader then that would have come easily, sports would have come easily... and I never would have realized that the way you get ahead in life is hard work.”

# Bob Geldof

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## ■ Bob Geldof:

- Achieved fame as the lead singer of *The Boomtown Rats*
- He co-authored the Band-Aid single *Do They Know It's Christmas?*
- He helped organize Live Aid (and, 20 years later, Live 8)

## ■ Bob's weakness is that he is tactless and often says the wrong thing:

- This held back the career of *The Boomtown Rats*

## ■ Bob was able to turn this drawback into a benefit:

- It enabled him to say things to world leaders that other people were too timid to say

# Richard Stallman

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- While growing up, Richard Stallman was a social outcast:
  - Due to a combination of poor social skills, a lack of interest in popular culture, his high intelligence and geekiness
- He turned this into a strength:
  - Being a social outcast meant that he grew used to rejection. So...
  - He did not fear yet more rejection when he started to develop free software

# Anita Roddick

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- Anita Roddick founded *The Body Shop*
- Her weakness was very limited finances
  - For example, she could not afford “proper” packaging bottles for shampoos
  - The cheapest bottles she could find were urine sample bottles
  - She asked customers to bring back empty bottles for refills
- The concept of cheap, reusable packaging became a strength
  - It fit in with ideas of environmentalism



# Gandhi

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- Gandhi's weakness was a fear of public speaking:
  - This greatly hindered his social life and his career as a lawyer in India
- Gandhi turned his weakness into a strength:
  - He thought carefully about what he wanted to say before he opened his mouth
  - Because of this:
    - He learned to communicate concisely
    - He rarely said things that he later regretted
- Eventually, Gandhi overcame his fear of speaking
  - But he continued to think carefully before speaking

# Sir Arthur Pearson

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- Sir Arthur Pearson:
  - Founded the *Daily Express* newspaper in England
  - Gradually lost his eyesight due to the disease Glaucoma
- When World War One started:
  - Arthur heard about a soldier who had been blinded in battle
  - He realized that many other soldiers would also be blinded
  - By default, most of them would lead “hopeless and useless lives”
- Arthur founded a hospital, St Dunstan's:
  - At the hospital, soldiers could “learn to be blind”
  - Being blind himself, Arthur was able to inspire and teach the soldiers

# Summary

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- Many people have a weakness of some sort:
  - Perhaps a disability
  - Perhaps a lack of skill, social etiquette or money
- A weakness does not have to hold you back
- Sometimes it is possible to turn a weakness into a strength