



## How Do You Handle Adversity? Like a Prisoner, Settler, or Pioneer?

***“Good timber does not grow with ease; the stronger the wind, the stronger the trees.” —J. Willard Marriott***

Any cyclist will tell you that riding downhill or downwind is a lot of fun. It’s possible to go fast with little effort. However, if your life depended on the strength and endurance of someone on a bicycle to reach emergency help in the shortest time possible, you’d want to choose a cyclist who has spent a lot of time riding **uphill** or **into** the wind. They are the ones who have overcome the adversity of incline and resistance and are therefore the strongest cyclists. The trials of their training have given them an edge, both physically and psychologically.

**However, not everyone responds to adversity the same way.**

There are generally three camps of people when it comes to facing adversity. And the different responses can help to explain the varying degrees of success experienced.

There are Prisoners, Settlers, and Pioneers. Let’s take a brief look at each one.

### **Prisoners**

- Are most likely to GIVE up
- Are conquered by fear, controlled by anger, and captured by circumstances
- Use language like “I can’t” and “It’s impossible”
- Perform at minimum levels, or just enough to get by

### **Settlers**

- Are most likely to COVER up
- Are satisfied with today, and with themselves. They are happy to be comfortable
- Use language like “It’s good enough” and “That’s as far as I can go”
- Will give some effort, show some drive, meet the minimum requirements, but never excel

### **Pioneers**

- Are most likely to CLIMB up
- Learn continuously, changing strategies & habits, and strive to meet the needs of the team or the cause
- Use language like “I choose to...” “We can...” and “Just do it”
- Show a sense of urgency, embrace challenges, and are always driven to improve

**Where do most of your reactions to adversity fall? How about the people on your team?**



In the book, *Adversity Quotient*, Dr. Paul Stoltz identifies three factors at the root of most responses. They are **genetics, upbringing, and faith**. And he asks these questions to help establish how much each aspect influences you.

1. Did your parents supply you with enough of the Pioneer genes that you automatically respond to adversity by working hard to overcome whatever it is?
2. Did your childhood environment provide you with real-life examples of people triumphing over their obstacles so that your response is “I am the kind of person that does that too.”?
3. Have you developed a positive, optimistic, hope-filled belief that the right attitude, coupled with hard work, always pays off with a victory or a lesson learned?

As a leader, you don't have control over “nature and nurture” that your followers experienced growing up. However, you can provide a simple PROCESS to grow their faith in the PIONEER response. This mindset will equip them with the tools to face adversity like a pioneer.

Teach them to have this internal conversation when faced with adversity:

1. Listen to your first response and ask yourself, “Does this kind of thinking help me generate a Pioneer approach to this obstacle, or is it a pity party?”
2. Next, ask yourself, “How can I reframe this or look at it differently to gain a new perspective?”
3. Finally, say to yourself, “I wonder what options are available to me that will propel us over, around, or through this obstacle.” To **wonder** is to activate the creative part of your brain, where “Ah-ha” type ideas come from.

**Teach your followers this fundamental skill and watch your team perform in exciting and creative ways.**

[CLICK HERE](#) to ask David Benzel a question about this topic.