

## ***Hope Happens!...words of en-courage-ment for Tough Times***

by Catherine DeVrye

'A leader is a dealer in hope.' So said Napoleon Bonaparte before his death in 1821. Nearly two centuries later, we need hope more than ever in our organizations and our personal lives.

Have you ever lost an important business deal or contract? Or, more importantly-lost a loved one or friend? Are you worried by lost health or wealth; loss of job or loss of perspective? Whether that loss is temporary or permanent, you need to dig deep for courage to get on with getting on-to find hope in seemingly hopeless situations.

When you've lost whatever is important in your life, it's important to find hope and as a leader, to help others find hope within themselves.

On September 11, 2001, I happened to address the World Airline Entertainment Association. I felt sickened by global events and also by bronchitis, when a friend phoned to say her mother had died of cancer. Certainly, she shared compassion with thousands of people on the other side of the globe, but the loss of one life weighed far heavier on her mind. To her, talk of the 'world changing' was more than a media cliché – the world always changes – but her own life had tumbled and changed irrevocably with the death of the one person who had always been central to her world.

As I sat despondently at the airport, I couldn't help but think that, undoubtedly, global tragedy impacts on us all in various ways, from the personal to the economic. Yet, ultimately, the everyday, non-publicized tragedies cause the greatest grief, wherever we live on the globe.

My thoughts were interrupted when a vibrant young woman introduced herself and said she had been inspired by one of my presentations, had since been promoted to London and took only six books, including the last one I'd written.

'Whenever I'm feeling down, I delve into that book and magically find just the right words of inspiration and encouragement,' she enthused.

'Oh, what chapter was that? I could do with a little inspiration myself at the moment!' I asked, before smiling at the irony.

More recently, a senior executive, one of my corporate clients, called-ostensibly just to say hello. 'How's things, Bill?'

'Oh I'm fine', he replied but something in the tone of his voice implied that he wasn't.

'Hmm. You don't sound your normal self.' I ventured.

'Well, uh, my father died this afternoon and I'm feeling kinda flat'.

What a classic understatement I thought, in the same breath wondering why he had called me, rather than one of his close friends or family? I offered words of condolence while we chatted at length, he obviously emotional but contained and in control as he believed his 'role' dictated. Hours later, I still wondered why he had called me-before realizing that he was the eldest son, head of his own family, chief of a large corporation and in fulfilling those various roles of leadership, felt that he needed to be perceived as a pillar of strength, unable to show emotion or perceived weakness even though what he felt was not at all weak but a normal human condition of grief.

Yes, it can be lonely at the top (or even in the middle!) and one should never feel too proud to ask for help from others who have walked that rocky road. People often ask how I coped when my

folks died when I was 21? What choice did I have? Cope or crumble -- and, I had no intention of crumbling. Since those early dark days, I've been privileged to meet world leaders, sports stars and music icons and was surprised to discover that, at times, they all share the same sense of loss and uncertainty as my next-door neighbor or a stranger on a plane. Behind the facade, no life is perfect and the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence. It never has been. It never will be.

But, today, and every day, we need to keep our plans and dreams alive and must not be swamped by nightmares of negativity and despair. Hope helps us cope with tough times.

**H**elp... others-and never be too proud to ask for help yourself. As an executive, your role is to help others help *themselves*, especially during tough times.

**O**ptimize...opportunities. In every business or personal problem, there is always an opportunity so remain optimistic.

**P**ersist...no matter what. Tough times don't last and tough people do, so never give up-in order to move from a victim of change to a victor of change.

**E**mpower...others and give yourself permission to be empowered to take time out for yourself, as you can't take care of others if you don't take care of yourself.

There's no better time to get some hope happening in your life and your organization. Whether it's the beginning of the calendar year or the financial year-today is still the first day of the rest of your life!

Catherine DeVrye, Australian Executive Woman of the Year, is a #1 best selling author and global speaker on service quality and change. This is a modified extract from her book *'Hope Happens!-words of encouragement for tough times..*