

# **Five Reasons Why Bad Things Happen**



**How to Turn Tragedies Into Triumph**

**by Brownell Landrum**

# **FIVE REASONS WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN: HOW TO TURN TRAGEDIES INTO TRIUMPH**

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## **PREFACE: WHY LOOK FOR A REASON WHY?**

A lovely, accomplished and deeply religious man and best-selling spiritual author told me he doesn't believe things happen for a reason.

I was stunned into silence.

Then I asked myself some questions:

- How can someone *not* see that things happen for a reason?
- What is required to have this belief?
- And, perhaps most importantly, does having this kind of understanding enhance someone's life?

The answers to the first two questions can come from basic laws of science, society and spiritual knowledge. First, of course, is science, which can explain the reaction to an action, whether in physics or chemistry. For example, if you heat water to 212°, it boils. Simple cause and effect. An action generates a reaction. Similarly, governmental laws are established to form a structured society, warning of a predictable response to a particular behavior. Don't run a traffic light, or you risk getting a ticket.

Universal spiritual laws of cause and effect also exist. To have faith things happen for a reason incorporates three fundamental concepts: the belief in a Higher Power, acknowledging our lives have purpose, and knowing our destiny isn't fixed, but affected by our actions (free will).

Uniting these three beliefs creates the logical conclusion of an ordered universe<sup>1</sup>, from which flows that things happen for a reason. Said another way, our Higher Power put us on this Earth for a reason. We are not here by accident. But, because He/She gave us free will, it is up to us whether we accomplish our mission.

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<sup>1</sup> As opposed to a random universe.

The next step in learning leads to question, “If things happen for a reason, what are the reasons?” The additional concepts in the chapter entitled *Basic Assumptions* establish the foundation which explains the Five Reasons Why. I’m confident that everyone who acknowledges alignment with these central principles will conclude not only that things happen for a reason, but that the Five Reasons Why offer the definitive explanation of *why*.

The answer to the third question above, “Does believing things happen for a reason make you happier? Does *not* believing make you *less* happy?” can be answered through my own experience.

My life wasn’t complete, and true happiness wasn’t possible, until I discovered the Five Reasons Why. When searching for an explanation of why my own personal tragedies occurred, I saw three choices, which were to (a) believe in a random universe, where there was no meaning or explanation to events; (b) fear “evil was out there” as an external, uncontrollable force; or (c) find a “higher level” explanation of why bad things happen.

The first two options were too depressing and made me feel weak and defenseless. Even in the midst of personal tragedies, I had too much faith my Higher Power not to look upward to find the answer.

My search was rewarded through a meditation that revealed the Five Reasons Why. Although they weren’t entirely new concepts, the unification and completeness of the Five has offered me a level of peace and understanding I had never known before. I feel better equipped to handle anything that happens in life.

For everyone, there are undeniable advantages in believing things happen for a reason, and even more so to be aware of what those reasons are. These benefits include added feeling of control, infinitely more optimism, advanced fulfillment, enhanced compassion, and the big kahuna: happiness.

First, let’s address control.

Self-efficacy, a key component of happiness, as described by noted psychologist Albert Bandura, is our “perceived ability to manage one’s personal functioning and the myriad environmental demands of the aftermath occasioned by a traumatic event.”

According to Bandura, “Self-efficacy affects whether individuals think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways; how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulties; the quality of their emotional life and vulnerability to stress and depression; resilience to adversity; and the choices they make at important decisional points which set life courses.”

Bandura goes on to say, “the key factors of traumatic stressors include perilousness, unpredictability and uncontrollability.”

The Five Reasons Why bestow self-efficacy, helping readers cope with perilousness, and explaining that everything is not only predictable but also controllable.

The skeptics out there are asking, “What if this control is an illusion?” Psychological studies have shown that optimism, even if illusory, enhances happiness, and that pessimism, even if based in reality, is a symptom of depression.<sup>2</sup> Interesting, right? We’re happier when we feel we have some control over our circumstances. While this may not be enough to change your basic psychological makeup, hopefully it’s enough to consider that skepticism won’t make you happy.

Optimism and fulfillment are a direct result of the self-efficacy and control which comes from the Reasons Why. Fulfillment is advanced when we are living the lives we choose, rather than one forced upon us by a controlling deity or through an unpredictable random universe. Our highest, and most optimistic, destiny is the one we co-create with the Divine.

Now that we’ve covered control, let’s look at compassion. Compassion is defined as “the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it.”<sup>3</sup> The Reasons Why give us the tools to “do something about it,” allowing us to be more comforting and compassionate. Instead of saying “life sucks” to a friend going through difficulties, suggesting that he’s at the mercy of either a random universe or a vengeful “god,” the Reasons Why helps provide a framework not only for understanding but also learning and solving the problem.

Finally, the Holy Grail: happiness. When we are equipped with the awareness that things happen for a reason, and can understand and resolve (and even prevent) the Reasons Why, we are able to achieve more love, peace and joy in our life.

This, my new friends, is the *why* of the Reasons Why.

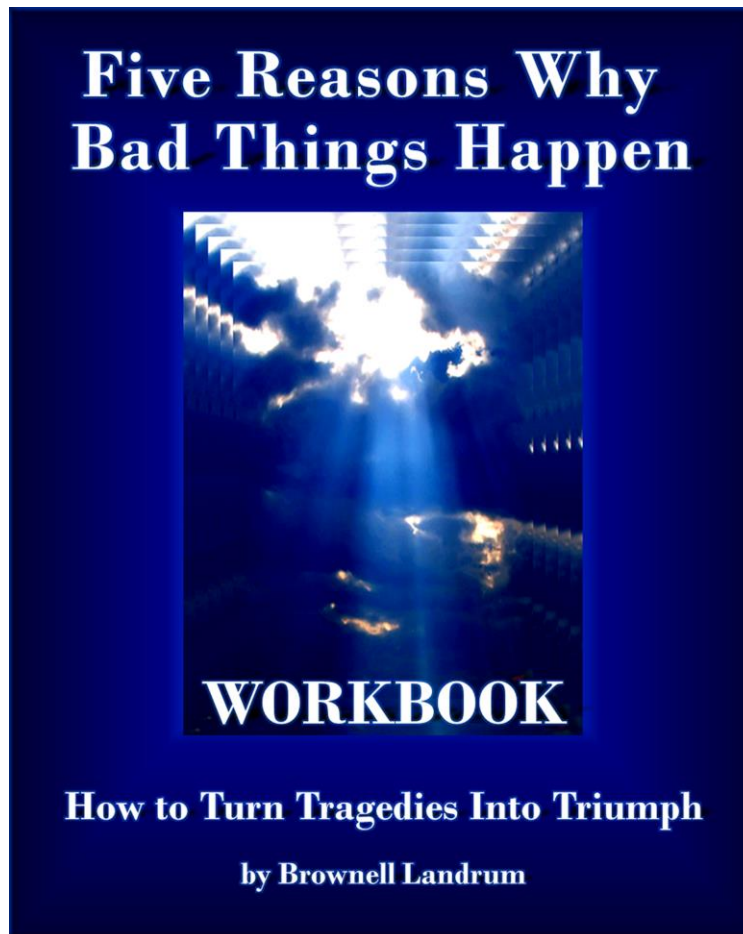
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<sup>2</sup> Taylor & Brown (1988), Bandura (1989).

<sup>3</sup> WordNet® 2.1, © 2005 Princeton University.

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