

Could You Survive?

It seems like there have been a lot of airplane crashes this past year; the most recent being AirAsia flight 8501, which crashed into the Java Sea and they are still trying to locate its exact position. When I think of the other accidents this year, like the Malaysian Airline accidents, makes me think of what it would be like to be one of the passengers of a plane crash. This was one of my past times when I would be on my many flights across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. As I flew along with my new best friends on an American Airlines flight from Shanghai to Chicago, or from Chicago to London, there would usually be enough turbulence in the air that the Captain would ask the flight attendants to take their seats, and the plane would seem to bob and bounce its way through the choppy air, with the fuselage creaking and twisting. I would look up at our flight map and see that we were dead in the middle of the Ocean, and that we would be for several hours, and I would often wonder.... what if?

I would sit there and wonder what would happen if the plane broke. What would happen to my new friends and me? I would think back to my physics class and try to calculate how long it would take for me to fall from our altitude; an object falls at the rate of $32\text{ft}/\text{sec}^2$. My calculator on my phone was in my carry-on stored safely in the storage bin above my seat, and the Captain had illuminated the "fasten your seat belt" sign, and I was stuck trying to do the math in my head, which I never really came up with exact answer. I figured that it would take several minutes to make my way to the ground below. According to an article in Popular Mechanics it would take about three minutes traveling at about 120 miles per hour, and that you could actually survive. I had always just come to the conclusion that I wouldn't survive the sudden impact of the

air, at a temperature of 75°, traveling at over 450 miles per hour. I would stop thinking about it, and go back to watching my movie or reading my book, or trying to sleep in the tight quarters that I owned for the short 13-hour flight.

I would like for you to imagine with me a scenario that actually took place, and think about what you would do if you were in the same situation, could you survive? Let's go back to October 13, 1972. You are on a chartered Uruguayan Air Force plane, a Fairchild F-227, heading from a Mendoza, Argentina to Santiago, Chile. The original plan was to fly direct from Montevideo, Uruguay, but bad weather in the Andes Mountains encouraged the pilot stop to spend the night in Argentina and wait for the weather to break. This version of the Fairchild, a twin-engine turbo prop, was limited to maximum cruising altitude of only 22,500 feet, which was barely enough to cross the world's second highest mountain range. A direct route from Mendoza would take them across Aconcagua, the highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere and the seventh highest in the World, with its summit reaching 22,831 feet (which on a side note, my brother has climbed this mountain, but only was about to make it to about 22,000 feet due to frostbite and a cold virus). The entire Andes Range has peaks from 16,000 and 22,000 feet. The pilots had to chart a course south of there through the Planchón Pass. It was either this or turn back for home, due to the Argentinian law that wouldn't allow a foreign military aircraft to spend more than 24 hours on its soil.

Let's continue our flight through the Planchón Pass across the Andes Mountains on our way to Santiago, Chile. The idea was to fly across this pass and once past the mountain range, we were to turn north towards Santiago. Well, as you might have guessed, this wasn't the route that the pilots flew. They thought they were flying along their flight plan, but something wasn't quite right. They thought they had made it through the pass, but in fact they had made a critical mistake and

headed North right into the middle of the Andes Mountains. A few minutes later, the passengers could see the mountains up close, too close. The turbulence started to get worse, most everyone assumed that they were okay even though the plane began to drop and climb without warning. Then suddenly they could hear the roar of the engines and they could feel the gravity force in their seats as the pilots desperately tried to climb. It was then that there was a severe bump and the sound of metal ripping and then the fuselage cracks open and the plane skids down the eastern slope of a snow packed glacier flowing down the mountain and broke up upon impact and they hurled down the snow covered terrain.

The passenger that I want to focus on is Nando Parrado, a 23-year-old Uruguayan who was with his Rugby teammates, friends and family on their way to a friendly match in Chile. They were teammates on the Old Christian rugby team, who won national championships in 1968 and 1970. Because of this they were able to arrange these friendly matches with teams from other countries. They went from enjoying their time with one another on their way on a long weekend of fun, to a terrifying crash into the Andes Mountains. All that Nando remembers from the crash the feel of the cold air and snow on his face and then being ripped from his chair and being thrown into the darkness. It wasn't until almost three days later would he wake up freezing cold and with blood caked on the side of his head where he had sustained a blow to the head. It was early spring in the Southern Hemisphere, but at an elevation over 10,000 feet, it was still cold, especially at night and on cloudy days.

There were 45 others on board along with the two pilots and two crew. Along with Nando was his Mother and Suzy his sister. When he awoke from his three day coma, he immediately started to ask about them, and no one would say either way. After his insistence his teammate Gustavo finally told him that his Mother was dead. For a short moment, Nando felt a moment of

grief and panic, but he then heard a voice in his head that told him “Do not cry. Tears waste salt. You will need salt to survive”. Here he is with his skull in pieces, freezing cold in the Andes mountains, with the news of his Mother’s death, this voice told him not to cry? Gustavo then began to tell him about the death of his best friend, Panchito and many others. Again, the voice spoke to him, “They are all gone. They are all part of your past. Don’t waste energy on things you cant’ control. Look forward. Think clearly. You will survive”.

Where did that voice come from? Was it his father's voice? After all, his father grew up with meager means and he started a horse supply business in the rural farmlands of Uruguay. After horses started began to be replaced with tractors, cars and trucks he had to diversify and move into the city where he started to sell hardware items. Nando remembered his father’s story of when he was a one of Uruguay’s top competitive rowers. He told him of a particular race in Argentina, where he found himself up in the front of the pack, neck and neck, with a competitor. His legs were burning, and his lungs couldn’t hold enough air to supply his aching muscles and he wanted to quit. But then he saw his competitor’s face, and he could see he was struggling as well, so he decided that he could suffer a little longer and he ended up winning the race by mere inches. He would see his father working in his store late, putting up stock, pouring himself over stacks of invoices, and do what ever it took to get the job done and provide for his family. Nando decided that he would need to stick it out and survive. After he received the news of his mother’s death, he immediately turned his attention to his sister Suzy, who had survived, yet badly injured. Nando would hold her and whisper into her ear the reassurance that they would soon be rescued.

Nando and Suzy survived his first night since coming out of his coma. They both were freezing and huddled together in the tight confines of the fuselage to try to stay warm; everyone did to conserve their body heat. They only had warm weather clothes and shoes, and could only

use the extra clothes from their carry-on baggage and the few blankets that were inside the broken fuselage. In the morning, Nando was able to venture out onto the mountainside where they came to rest. As he looked to the West, all he could see was the steep slope of the icy mountain, which came to a jagged point at its summit. Looking toward the East, he could see the glacier that they had come to rest on, swerving its way down to a valley miles below, and mountain tops as far as he could see. Nando realized that they were in a bad place. They were so high in the mountains that there was no vegetation, no other life existed there, they would have been better off in the middle of the ocean. As he tried to comfort his sister as she lay dying of her internal injuries, he fought back the tears of despair and focused on praying for their rescue, he could hear the whisper come back saying, "No one will find us. We will die here. We must make a plan."

Up until this time, the 5th day of their ordeal, Nando had spent most of his time tending to his younger sister, and along with everyone else, hoping that they would be rescued. On this day some of the survivors decided that they would see if they could climb up the mountain to get a better vantage point. They had to make some snow shoes by strapping the seat cushions to their feet so they could keep from sinking in the deep snow. This worked and off they went trying to climb the mountain that lay before them. A few hours later they returned to the wreckage, only to explain how steep the mountain was and how hard it was for them to climb, their lungs starving for oxygen. They only made it a few hundred yards, and realized that they had so much more to go. That evening Nando lay with his sister, this time her breaths became shorter and erratic. She was slipping away from Nando. He desperately tried to resuscitate her, along with some of the others, but to no avail; she had died. Nando again fought back the tears, and his chest heaved as he thought about his situation. His Mother and sister were now dead along with several of his

teammates and friends; only 28 were left. Nando lay there defeated, swimming in a pool of mental despair thinking he would lose his mind. Then he pictured his father on the river and he remembered his words: "I decided that I would not quit. I decided I would suffer a little longer." At that moment, Nando made a promise to his father, "I will struggle. I will come home. I will not let the bond between us be broken. I promise you, I will not die here! I will not die here!" It was now that Nando realized that he must continue to look forward, and not get too overwhelmed with the loss of his Mother and sister, but to focus on his father and getting back to him. Sure he had moments of doubt, but he had to begin to change his mindset from despair to hope. He had to figure out a way off of the mountain. With a new resolve, Nando started to plan their escape.

They had been on the mountain for a week now, and their supplies were running out. They had collected all of the food from the luggage that was with them. They only had some chocolate bars and other snacks that they had been rationing out. Nando started to realize that they were not going to be rescued at this point and that they could survive the elements, but that they were going to starve to death. Up at that altitude climbers will burn up to 15,000 calories a day. They weren't climbing anywhere but since they were shivering all night and trying to move around during the day, they were burning more calories than they were bringing in. They were also becoming very dehydrated. There they were surrounded by water, frozen water, but their lips were getting chapped and bloodied and swollen from eating the ice.

One of the survivors figured out that he could use a piece of aluminum railing and create a funnel, fill it with snow in the morning and then put it on the top of the Fairchild's fuselage where the sun would heat the aluminum and melt the snow. They began to set up a small factory of making these devices so that they could make water; at least when the sun was shining, and just enough to keep them from succumbing to dehydration. But then the realization of their rations

running out began to set in with Nando. They needed to get off of the mountain, and they needed the strength to do so, yet they had no more food; or did they? Nando began to talk about them using the bodies of the dead for a source of protein that they desperately needed in order to survive. Yes, cannibalism, a horrible thought, but it was this or they would all be dead from starvation. They would eventually vote on it. A few of them could not fathom even the thought of doing this, but they would again unite and take what was given to them to survive. This might sustain them until they were rescued, and they had all slept that night with a new glimmer of hope.

On their eleventh day on the mountain, they had figured out how to get a small transistor radio to work in hopes of hearing how the search was going. It would take two guys to operate the radio, one to manipulate the makeshift antenna and the other to adjust the tuner. They would move away from the wreckage up the mountain as far as they could go to get a clear signal. They had finally achieved their goal and they were able to pick up a voice and they listened intently. The rest of the group watched as they heard the news that the search was called off. They were left for dead; another blow to their psyche. But not Nando, he was determined that the only way to survive was to climb the mountain to the west to the green valleys in Chile.

As you can imagine, the group had fallen back into depression, knowing that their fate had come. Yet Nando insisted that they now had to get off of the mountain despite their not knowing their location or where to even go. They all thought it was a suicide mission to leave the security of their new home. Yet they all knew that they couldn't survive very much longer and they were coming to the realization that they were not going to be rescued, they needed to do something. So they agreed to send a few of them on this mission. The rest of the group thought that it would be

too difficult to travel West over the mountain, that they should take what looked like the easier route to the East down the glacier and into to the valley below in hopes of finding civilization.

It was October 29th, the day before they were to leave on their expedition. While they were tucked into the Fairchild for the night, they were all fading into their shivering sleep. When all of a sudden the fuselage was filled with snow, covering most everyone with several feet. One survivor heard the avalanche and was able to stand up before it overtook the Fairchild's make shift wall. In the darkness, he began digging for the faces and then moving to the next person if he could find them and get the snow off of them before they suffocated; they lost several more. Now they were buried with only several feet of clearance to the top of the fuselage. What were they going to do next? They would run out of air soon and they would all die. A new sense of despair fell upon them.

Nando was dug out just in time and he lay wondering what to do next. He knew that they would need to get air for they were now encased in a tomb of snow covering the Fairchild. He found a pole from the luggage compartment and he was able to get to drive it through the top of the fuselage and get them some badly needed fresh air. But then they were still buried in the frozen ice, so he began to dig. They all took turns, working their way out of the cockpit of the Fairchild. The avalanche had covered the plane with a few feet of snow. It was still storming outside, and the 19 survivors had to wait it out in their cramped quarters. Nando started to discuss their escape and they worked on their plan over the next several days.

They spent the next two weeks digging themselves out and getting their home back in order. On November 17th, which was more than a month since the crash, they were able to send out the few elected pioneers and they started their way down the mountain. After only a few hours, the weather started to turn n them, and it began to snow, harder and harder it snowed.

They turned back toward the Fairchild and spent the next two days in the fuselage waiting out the storm. Once it had passed, they decided to restart their journey. They trekked down the glacier for what seemed like miles, and they came upon the tail section of the plane where the luggage was stored and where the batteries were held. They pilfered all of the food that they could find, confiscated some of the clothes and spent a couple of nights in the spacious tail section. They awoke the next morning and reluctantly left the security of their new much more comfortable shelter. After a long day of hiking down the glacier, they spent their first night without the shelter of the plane. They nearly froze to death, and they didn't think they would make it another night. They decided that the best thing to do was to go back to the tail section and take the batteries and extra supplies up to the rest of the group and try to get the airplane's radio working so they could call for help. This sounded easy, but they had to figure out a way to carry the batteries. They couldn't do it, they were too heavy, so they decided to bring the radio down to the batteries. It was not the best scenario, but it was their only hope.

Once they reached the remaining survivors, who were not very happy to see them, since they were hoping by now, five days later, that they would have made it to safety and were going to be rescued. They did, however, appreciate their new supply of fresh clothes and morsels of food and more importantly, the hope of their getting the airplane's radio to work. They spend the next several days removing the radio from the cockpit and they were now ready to make it back to the tail section with the batteries. They made their way back to the tail section and they would work for a couple of days trying to get the radio to work, but to no avail. Nando spent this time looking around for other things that they could use for their trek out of the mountains and he was able to find some insulation that was wrapped around some pipes. Maybe they could insulate their

clothes or something. They ended up using this to make a sleeping bag that they would use in the days to come.

It had been 60 days on the mountain, and they survived another near death experience fighting the mountain and another blizzard on their way back to the rest of the team. They decided that it was time to try the western route. They were anxious and scared, but they knew that they were running out of time for their food supply was running out. This was their only hope of survival. So three of them set off to the west, Nando at the lead, headed toward the summit of the mountain that had loomed over them for the past two months. The altimeter in the plane said that they were at 7,000 feet, but they would later find out that they were actually at 12,000 feet, and that the mountain that they were trying to take on was one of the highest in the Andes, at a height of almost 17,000 feet. It was later estimated that it would be a treacherous climb for a very experienced mountaineering team with all of the modern equipment. They had none of this, but they were working off of the will to live; for Nando it was to see his Father.

With this challenge ahead of them, they managed to climb some 2,500 feet in the first day, dealing with altitude sickness and the overwhelming task ahead of them. As they dealt with much steep terrain and close to 14,500 feet of altitude, it took everything they had to take one step, let alone climb 2,500 more feet. This is exactly what Nando decided he had to do, not look at the summit as a destination but a goal and each step as putting him another foot closer. He would pick landmarks closer to them and focus on them, picking another one and another one. Every step required absolute concentration as they worked their way up the ever-increasing incline. Nando would think to himself, one more step, one more breath. This would continue for another two days until Nando finally reached the final summit where he had a 360° view of the world. He quickly realized that the pilots were very much off course and that they were deeper in the Andes

than he had thought. He would have to deal with yet another setback, and yet he collected himself and remembered his Father and his love for him. At this moment he realized that “the opposite of death is not life, but it was love”, and this would help him keep going. He had so much respect for this mountain that he would later name it, Mount Seler after his father.

They could see in the distance, mountains without snow on them, but they were some 50 miles away. They decided to send one of the team back to the crash site so that the other two could use his food and so they could travel faster. Nando turned to his partner and said, “We may be walking to our deaths, but I would rather walk to meet my death than wait for it to come to me.” They began to work their way down the mountain.

After a few days of hiking down the mountain, they heard the rushing noise of water. They actually found the beginning of a river, a glacier fed river that widened out as it made its way through the valley they were following. After a few more days, the ninth day of their journey, they spotted what they thought were cows way off in the distance, and they found a old used aluminum can. It seemed that at any moment they would find a peasant hut or someone tending their flock. They were getting ready to make camp for the night, when all of sudden they spotted a man on a horse across the raging river. As they ran towards him, they could barely hear his voice over the roar of the river, but they thought they heard him say, “mañana”. At last, on the following day they were greeted by their savior, and they were able to get help for the remaining 14 survivors.

Now let’s head due north, to another flight that would end in tragedy. It is the story of Louis Zamperini that was so beautifully illustrated in the book and movie of the same name, “Unbroken”. Louie would show the world that you can overcome such an absolute horrible situation, one after the other, and yet end up living a fulfilling and amazing life. As his brother

Pete once told him, “ if you can take it, you can make it” and he also said “a moment of pain is worth a lifetime of glory”. Louie certainly survived on these words.

Without going through his entire life story and ruining the movie for those that were still planning on seeing it, I will briefly describe the environment that he had lived and had to overcome. He was born to Italian immigrants who lived in California. He started out as a juvenile delinquent and was headed for a life of crime and incarceration. His brother encouraged him to run, literally run, which he would end up competing in the 5,000-meter race in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. He had then set his sights on Tokyo to compete in the 1940 Olympic games.

He would eventually get to Tokyo, but not on his terms. He would first join the Army Air Corp and would become a bombardier on a B-24 Liberator named, “Superman”. He would have to work under some adverse conditions with only a 50% chance of making his 40-mission tour. In fact, in World War II 36,000 Army Air Forces planes would be lost, most of which were non-combat accidents. In the Pacific theater in 1943 for every plane lost in combat there would be 6 lost in accidents; 36,000 airmen died in non-combat situations with a majority of these dying in accidental crashes. Louie would survive 10 of these serious mechanical failures.

If these odds were not enough, with the long-range capability of the B-24, Louie would be assigned to the Pacific and they would have to deal with: Tropical Weather conditions and difficult navigation over vast areas of the ocean taking aim at tiny islands with tight runways. On top of this, they were usually met with flack bombs, anti-aircraft guns and the Japanese Zeros once they reached their drop zone. If they were to have to ditch their plane, they most likely would have to ditch in the Ocean. This presented them with another list of obstacles.

They first had to survive the water landing. If they made it through the crash, they could drown or worse, be attacked by sharks. If they were able to climb safely onto a raft, they would

have to endure the cold nights, and brutal sunshine during the day, all the while knowing that the sharks were close by. Due to the vastness of the ocean, and the lack of homing technology, the chances of being rescued were very slim. Their biggest fear was being captured by the Japanese.

They knew about the “Rape of Nanking” where the Japanese Army executed over 300,000 Chinese military and civilians. Once the Japanese invaded an island or country, they would enslave the inhabitants. They would not adhere to rules of the Geneva Convention, and they would torture, beat and force the POW’s into slave labor, while providing horrific living conditions where they would not adequately feed or provide good water to the POW’s. Of the over 34,000 US POW’s held by the Japanese, more than 12,000 or 37% of them died; which was much worse than their European counterparts who were dealing with only a 1% chance of death due to their incarceration.

In the 27 months after his ill-fated flight on the Green Hornet in May of 1943, Louie Zamperini was able to survive the crash into the Ocean, being stranded for 46 days in a raft, surviving being shot at by a Japanese bomber, then being captured by the Japanese and then surviving several different prison camps, and having to endure frequent beatings from an obsessed prison guard named the Bird. If surviving this weren’t enough, once he was back in the US, he would suffer from severe Post Traumatic Disorder Syndrome. He would eventually make it back to a normal life due to his tremendous will to live. Louie’s tremendous love that he had for his family would help get him through all of his ordeals. He would dream of his life back in Torrance, with his family. This was his hope. This was his survival tool.

Both Louie and Nando had a knack for survival. They were faced with unfathomable odds, yet they were able to overcome their situation and survive. Dr. Jason Selk, Psychologist, Personal Coach, Author and Speaker, would rank them among in the top 10 for Mental Toughness. He

defines it in his book “Executive Toughness”, as the ability to be optimistic that your life will turn out the way you want because of the effort you put into that mission. Dr. Selk is one of the reasons that the St. Louis Cardinals were able to win their last two World Series Pennants within a six-year period as their Director of Mental Training. He was able to help them see what they wanted to be, train them to be mentally tough, and to succeed. Louie and Nando had a vision of how they wanted their life to turn out and they had the mental toughness to get to their destination; the goal of getting back to their families.

So, if we look at these two stories, we can see that we have two paths that we can take when faced with life’s difficulties. We can either choose “Problem-Centric Thought” or “Relentless Solution Focus”. Dr. Selk’s theory is based on the notion that we are created with the tendency to focus on our problems instead of focusing on the solution to the problem. He illustrates this in his book by giving the example of oxygen; without it we die quickly. Yet we do not think during each breath how lucky we are to have oxygen to breath, unless you are Nando buried alive in the avalanche or are Louie gasping for air as he was trapped in the Green Hornet as it sunk to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. We tend to take the positive for granted. Of course the Media takes advantage of this tendency when they report “the exceptions” rather than the positive. They don’t focus on how many car accidents, murders or other tragedies didn’t occur in any given day, but how horrible things are, whether it be the economy, the weather or some other negative thing that could happen. Think about the how Hollywood focuses a majority of the movies they produce on problems rather than the solutions. Ironically, the media has to focus on problems, because if not, they probably wouldn’t survive.

Think about how we are trained to deal with relational problems. We are to talk it out, to rehash the issue we are having with our wives, kids, family, or co-workers. All this does is to bring

up the negative feelings that we had in the first place, and refuel our resolve to be right. We need to recognize the issue, but then look for ways to improve our situation and to do it over and over again until we are free from the issue that caused the grief in the first place. Since this is a natural tendency, it is very difficult to overcome. It isn't just a matter of being positive about something, but more about having optimism, which Dr. Selk defines as: Hopefulness and confidence about the future or successful outcome of something; a tendency to take a favorable or hopeful view.

During my training as a Stephen's Minister, we were taught that feelings are real, that if someone perceived something and this caused them to feel a certain way, that those feelings or their perception was real, almost a matter of fact. This explains why so many people either commit suicide or homicide. They do not see any other way out of their reality, or their feelings about a situation. Feelings are real; we feel what we feel because that is how we feel. It is the changing of our perception that allows us to deal with these feelings and remove ourselves from this self-generated reality.

The Expectancy Theory is based on the notion that the more we think about something the bigger it gets.. For example when run into a problem the more we think about it, the problem begins to grow, it begins to snowball, and we end up over thinking the problem to a point where we make it so big we fall into despair. To illustrate this, Dr. Selk gives an example of a baseball player up to bat at the plate, in the bottom of the 8th inning with the score tied and with two outs, he strikes out. On the way back to the dugout, he is mad at himself and he begins the negative thoughts about what just happened. He comes to the realization that he is 0 for 4 that night and his average is falling below 200, that his contract is up for renewal and if he doesn't get a good contract or worse he gets released, then how will he be able to afford the house that he just bought for his family, how would he explain this to his beautiful wife and new born? He gets his glove and

heads out to centerfield, still focusing on the problem. As the batter comes to the plate he continues to dwell on his new reality. He hears the crack of the bat, and he looks for the ball; which is well on its way into the outfield between he and the right fielder. Since he got a late jump on the ball it falls just out of his diving reach and now the triple adds to his problem-focused thought.

What if he were to look at the strikeout differently. Let's say that on the way back to the dugout, the batter is still mad but this time he focused on his role, and that he wasn't happy with his performance. However, this time he realizes that he has a job to do and that is to get out to centerfield and play defense. This time he is concentrating on his warm-up throws, taking dead aim at his target, focusing on the ball coming to him and watching it into his glove, squeezing his glove tightly around the ball as it makes contact with the webbing. As the batter comes to the plate, he is now focusing on the ball in the pitcher's hand. He sees him release it towards the plate trying to see the rotation of the ball, and he sees the bat make contact with the ball. This time he gets a good jump on the ball and he is able to make the catch and the out. This is the opposite of Problem-Centered Focus; this is what Dr. Selk calls, Relentless-Solution Focus.

In the second scenario, the baseball player asks himself the question: What is the one thing that I can do differently that could make this situation better? Dr. Selk refers to this thinking as +1 Solution or any improvement to a current situation. We often want to work through a complete resolution to a problem and if we cannot see how we will make it all of the way through our situation, then we tend to give up or just feel sorry for ourselves. Think back to Nando, how he focused on getting back to his family, but it was one step at a time, or in some cases one breath at a time. He didn't try to figure it all out at once; he focused on what he could do at that moment to make the situation better. When they were starving, he focused on what they could do to find

food, not what would happen if they didn't. Louie, when stranded in the raft for the 46 days got hungry, he focused on what they could do to eat; they would capture and eat the birds that would land on their raft or even hand-catch a baby shark as it swam past their boat. When the avalanche entombed Nando and the others, his first thought was to breathe, and then once that was taken care of, he focused on digging himself out. This Relentless Solution focus that both Nando and Louie had, allowed them to be open to different solutions. By freeing up their minds from the clutter of the problem, they were able to have a clear mind and allow the thoughts to flow. It is said by some scientists and Dr. Selk supports this in his theory, that when we are focusing on solutions rather than problems, there are actual chemical changes that take place in our brains that excite us versus the fear producing chemicals that actually lower our immune systems and hinder our ability to reason. Similarly, in Eckhart Tolle's book, "A New Earth, Awakening to Your Life's Purpose", he shows how we can rid ourselves of certain beliefs, or ego-based state of conscientiousness to a new state of conscientiousness. That we can break the cycle of negative thinking and open our minds up to the now, or to what we can do right now to make the situation better, to allow ourselves to be open to new possibilities and not stuck in problem-centered focus thinking. Additionally, Lynn Grabhorn, the author of a New York Times Best Seller entitled, "Excuse Me, Your Life is Waiting, the Astonishing Power of Feelings" takes this one step further. She identifies, as do Dr. Selk and Eckhart Tolle that the negative thought pattern or the problem-centered focus thinking creates a vibe within us, that it is actually emitted or projected through our countenance or our aura. That people can actually feel your vibe as you approach them and that like vibes are actually attracted to one another; that by continually focusing on our problems or negative thoughts that we actually attract or are attracted to others that are of the same mindset. As Dr. Selk points out about the Expectancy Theory, as we think about problems, the

problems begin to grow and these problems beget more problems. All three of these authors are in agreement that focusing on the problem, inhibits our ability to see a solution, and therefore we are not going to be able to achieve our desired outcome and we are not going to survive.

So to get back to my question from so long ago, if faced with a scenario like Nando or Louie's, could you survive? Could you overcome the tendency to focus on the problem, versus having Relentless Solution Focus? Of course, this applies to our everyday challenges and obstacles. We most likely will not be in an airplane crash, but we will or have had to deal with the many obstacles that life brings our way. So when this happens, think as Nando and Louie did, and ask yourself the question, "What one thing can I do right now to make this situation better?" Because asking yourself that one question will be the key to your survival.

Sources:

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