

The donkey in the well

A reader searched for the old story of the donkey in the well on my site, and I was surprised that I had never used it.

No doubt you know the old story. A farmer had a donkey which was getting along in years. One day, the donkey fell into an abandoned well. The well was quite deep, and as the farmer looked down at the poor beast, shivering in the cold well, he decided that it would be almost impossible to pull the donkey out of the well, which although it was wide, was too deep.

So the farmer made a decision -- since the donkey was going to die anyway, he would bury the donkey in the well, covering up the well and the donkey all in one fell swoop.

He started to shovel, and after a few minutes' shoveling, he looked into the well. What he saw amazed him. With each shovel of dirt, the donkey would throw the dirt off his back, and step up on the mound of dirt. As the farmer shoveled, the donkey kept the routine up -- he would throw off the dirt, step up on the mound, and get a little higher in the well.

Finally, the farmer had shoveled in enough dirt that the donkey got out of the well, threw off the last shovelful of dirt into the farmer's face, and walked off.

What can we learn? It's obvious, isn't it? No matter how much dirt gets thrown at us, no matter what our problems may be, we throw them off our back, and use them as stepping stones to make ourselves rise even higher.

We have talked in the past about our individual responses to challenging times -- and truth be told, it's one of the best ways to see what people are really made of. When times get tough, some people lay down and die -- figuratively, if not literally. Others rise to the occasion, turn the challenge around, address it and make it a stepping stone, not a stumbling block.

It's certain that in our lives we will have problems. Life is full of challenges to be addressed. We grow through addressing those challenges. The old adage is true: a calm sea does not make a great mariner. It's when we address the downturns in our lives that we gain more control over our future.

We learn from watching greatness at work -- and in this case, we can learn from the story of the donkey. Many people would have panicked and let themselves

get buried alive -- but the donkey had learned to deal with his surroundings and turn his challenges into triumphs.

We can learn that too.

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