



INTRODUCTION

taken from *W Mitchell's Book*

**“IT’S NOT WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU,
IT’S WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT”**

*Author: W Mitchell
p. xi-xii*



“Life is what you make it,” they say.

You may doubt this. “If only, Mitchell,” you might say. “If only I were not so old. So broke. So undereducated. If only my wife/husband/boss/kid would support me in my quest for happiness. I got a raw deal, Mitchell.”

To which I simply say: Look at me.

My face looks like a badly made leather quilt; it has inspired children to chant, “Monster, Monster,” as I pass. I have no fingers. I cannot walk.

Furthermore, all of this did not happen at once—I did not have the “luxury” of one great, grand accident to get over. *First*, I was burned nearly to a crisp; there is probably not one person in a billion who has endured more physical pain that I have. Then four years later, in an entirely separate accident, I was paralyzed from the waist down. The average person might call me the unluckiest man alive.

But what I hope to do is this book is teach you not to think like the average person. This book—part autobiography, part self-help lesson—aims to show you that *nothing, absolutely nothing is absolute. Your life is entirely what you decide it is. It is your spaceship, your up, your down. The universe starts in your head and spreads out into the world. Change what happens in your head, and the universe changes.*

Really.

I hope to be your touchstone, your route to a new mind. Symbols are potent. The liberty bell conjures the concept of freedom in a single, glowing image. The Taj Mahal shows us, at a glance, the depth and extravagance of human love. The Golden Gate bridge, in my adopted hometown of San

Francisco, is a testament to engineering ingenuity that speaks volumes.

I want to be a symbol for you. With my scarred face, my fingerless paws, my wheelchair—and real, genuine happiness in my heart—I want to be your mental image of the power of the human mind to transcend circumstances. As I say in my speeches, “It’s not what happens to you, it’s what you do about it.” When you feel you have met an insurmountable obstacle, I want you to think of me. Then say to yourself, “If he can be successful, I can.”

What kind of success are we talking about? I can rattle off my resume stuff: millionaire, mayor, member of many boards of directions, environmental leader, media personality, political commentator, commercial pilot, in-demand public speaker, even river-rafter and sky diver, but these may not be—probably are not—the measure of success. **Nonetheless, whatever you want, you can achieve it, just as I have.**

You can because you are not that different from me. I don’t have any special powers, any magical gift of birth that has allowed me to create my own happiness in the face of trials. I am no stronger or smarter than the average person. I am a long way from a “saintly” guy. In fact, one of the secrets I’ll reveal is that being pushy and even obnoxious at the right times has been crucial to my success.

Really, the only difference between you and me at the moment is that I had the good fortune to learn a few important points along the way—both before and after my injuries—that helped me immeasurably. In this book, I will pass them along to you. If they have kept me happy, imagine what they will do for you.

I have a great Life. You can have a great life, too.

W MITCHELL, CSP, CPAE

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