



# Check Out the Rear-View

## This is How Hindsight Can Help You Appreciate Just How Strong You Are

By Felicia Brown, LMBT

**ONE OF THE BENEFITS** of hindsight is knowing how to make better choices in life and business. Looking in the rear-view also provides the knowledge that you have survived everything that's been thrown at you so far, and lived to tell about it.

This also lines up with one of my favorite quotes: "That which doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Although this

is not always what happens, especially in terms of accidents, disease or severe trauma, as a teen and young adult, I clung to this quote like a lifeline. As an adult, that lifeline transformed into a chain of prayer beads made of grace and gratitude.

Relevant to my time as a massage therapist and owner of multiple massage-based practices and spas, I could probably

fill a book with the various situations that didn't kill me but sometimes made me wish they had. Here, I'll share some of my personal experiences and how I worked through them with the hope that they can inspire you to check out the rear-view and give yourself credit for how far you've come.

One experience that comes to mind is when my former assistant admitted to embezzling thousands of dollars from me at a time when I was not taking a paycheck and living off my tips, credit cards and savings. The pain of the betrayal was soul-crushing, as was the perilous chain of events and challenges created by the missing funds. I also felt like a fool for not

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seeing what was going on and for allowing someone to have so much access to my financial well-being.

However painful, that experience prompted me to create a series of checks, balances and security measures in my spa that my trusting heart had never considered before. It also made me a much more careful money-manager and prompted me to keep up with my company's finances in an eyes-wide-open and daily rather than monthly basis. I also learned to not put all my trust or too much responsibility on any one person in my business. The ordeal nearly ruined me, but I survived and got stronger.

Another situation came a few years later in 2008. Just three years after selling my first spa for a tidy sum, I had an unplanned opportunity to open another, even though I had no real desire to do so. However, it seemed destined and on paper appeared to be the perfect situation. The location was convenient, ideally located and was essentially turnkey. I had a list of trusted vendors and suppliers as well as tested processes and procedures. Staff and clients were lined up and calling well ahead of our opening.

As a result, I approached opening the new spa with the high confidence of an experienced captain and a much larger sense of spending freedom than I'd had before. Even when ripples of worry began to spread about a possible real estate crisis, which grew into the Great Recession of 2008, I was confident my business and I would be fine. After all, my first spa prospered in spite of the roller coaster ride following 9/11, and this time I had funds from the bank to fall back on. However, the ripples quickly turned into dark waves of reality as appointments waned, clients dropped off, and key employees jumped ship to do what they felt would help them survive.

I can't purely blame the recession, my overconfidence, staff, or anything else for my decision to close my business after less than a year. It was the perfect storm of all those factors and others that made the waters too rough to stay afloat. Looking back, I see it may have been the only way for me to realize I was not ready to be back in the role of owning a spa. It

definitely helped me grasp how important it was for my heart to be invested in such a business—and not just my time, energy and money. I also understand now that success and prosperity have a lot more to do with perspective than profits.

Both of these lessons were painful and knocked me to my knees, but I got through them bit by bit and got back on my feet again.

My stories are not unique, although I've had many a day of feeling like no one could understand what I was going through. Luckily, authenticity is much more in fashion now than it once was, and many people, including me, openly share their stories of loss and failure. I can't speak for everyone, but I know one of the reasons I speak and write about the difficulties I've encountered is to create a road map for others who might be facing a similar journey. Part of my personal mission in life is to help others succeed, whether by pointing out guideposts to navigate a journey similar to one I've been through or by simply offering them some

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In part, I am doing that for myself too—to document what helped me get through the crazy maze behind me so that if I get stuck in it again, I know how to find my way to the other side.


Part of sharing one's story, whether through writing, speaking or other creative endeavors, is to remind yourself that you did in fact make it through. That because of those adventures, lessons or problems, you found something inside yourself you didn't know you had—a strength, a weakness, a need for help—and

utilized it all to push on, change directions or wait it out. You moved forward, backward and in circles as you tiptoed or sprinted your way through.

Hindsight—looking backward to where you once were—is an opportunity to congratulate yourself for making it to now. As long as you are looking over your shoulder, you might as well watch as you give yourself a pat on the back. Learning to be proud of and grateful for yourself for surviving it all is as much a lesson as anything—and in hindsight is something you probably should have done sooner.

Hindsight shouldn't just be about seeing what we could or should have done differently. Hindsight is also a great tool for assessing what we have accomplished, done well and conquered. Thought of in this way, perhaps we could call it high-five sight. Rather than thinking, *well, if I had it to do all over again, I would do it another way*, why not use your experiences to catalog all the things that you have done well, fought through and survived? **M**

Felicia Brown, LMBT, is a business, marketing and life coach—as well as a recovering workaholic and a survivor of multiple burnouts. She is a regular contributor to *MASSAGE Magazine*; read the article, “This is what the Highest-Earning Massage Therapists Have in Common,” featuring Brown, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com). Download her free e-book, “Do ONE Thing,” on [spalutions.com](http://spalutions.com).

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