

Do you suffer from bad luck?

Here's how to improve your fortune



Are you one of those people who are always suffering setbacks? Does little ever seem to go right for you? Are you dogged by constant instances of sheer bad luck? Do you sometimes feel that the universe is out to get you?

Let me let you into a secret: your luck is no worse—and no better—than anyone else's. It just feels that way. Better, still, there are two simple things you can do which will reverse your feelings of being unlucky.

- **Stop believing that what happens in your life is down to the vagaries of luck, destiny, supernatural forces, malevolent other people, or anything else outside your self.**

[Psychologists](#) call this “external locus of control.” It’s a kind of fatalism, where people believe that they can do little or nothing personally to change their lives. Because of this, they either merely hope for the best, focus on trying to change their luck by various kinds of superstition, or submit passively to whatever comes—while complaining that it doesn’t match their hopes.

Most successful people take the opposite view. They have “internal locus of control.” They believe that what happens in their life is nearly all down to them; and that even when chance events occur, what is important is not the event itself, but how you *respond* to it.

This makes them pro-active, engaged, ready to try new things, and keen to find the means to change whatever in their lives they don’t like. They aren’t fatalistic and they don’t blame bad luck for what isn’t right in their world. They look for a way to make things better.

Are they luckier than the others? Of course not. Luck is random—that’s what chance means—so they are just as likely to suffer setbacks as anyone else. What’s different is their response. When things go wrong, they quickly look for ways to put them right. They don’t whine, pity themselves, or complain about “bad luck.” They try to learn from what happened to avoid or correct it next time and get on with living their life as best they can.

No one is habitually luckier or unluckier than anyone else. It may seem so, over the short term (Random events often come in groups, just as random numbers often lie close together for several instances—which is why gamblers tend to see patterns where none exist). When you take a longer perspective, random chance is just . . . random. Yet those who feel that they are less lucky, typically pay far more attention to short-term instances of bad luck, convincing themselves of the correctness of their belief.

Your locus of control isn't genetic. You learned it somehow. If it isn't working for you, change it.

- **Remember that whatever you pay attention to grows in your mind.**

If you focus on what's going wrong in your life—especially if you see it as “bad luck” you can do nothing about—it will seem blacker and more malevolent. In a short time, you'll become so convinced that everything is against you that you'll notice more and more instances where this appears to be true. As a result, you will almost certainly stop trying, convinced that nothing you can do will improve your prospects.

Fatalism feeds on itself, until people become passive “victims” of life's blows. The “losers” in life are those who are convinced they will fail before they start anything; sure that their “bad luck” will ruin any prospects of success. They rarely notice that the true reasons for their failure are ignorance, laziness, lack of skill, lack of forethought, or just plain foolishness—all of which they could do something to correct, if only they would stop blaming other people or “bad luck” for their personal deficiencies.

Your attention is under your control. Send it where you want it to go. Starve the negative thoughts until they die.

To improve your fortune, first decide that what happens is nearly always down to you; then try focusing on what works and what turns out well, not the bad stuff. Your “fate” really does depend on the choices that you make. When random events happen, as they always will, do you choose to try to turn them to your advantage . . . or just complain about them?

Thomas Jefferson is said to have used these words: “I'm a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.” Ralph Waldo Emerson said: “Shallow men believe in luck. Strong men believe in cause and effect.”

Your luck, in the end, is pretty much what *you choose it to be*.

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