

BROWNELL LANDRUM

FIVE
REASONS
WHY
BAD THINGS
HAPPEN

How To Turn Tragedies
Into Triumph

SUMMARY GUIDE

Five Reasons Why Bad Things Happen

How to Turn Tragedies Into Triumph



by Brownell Landrum

A chapter-by-chapter companion to the full book

Preface & Introduction

From the first moment of consciousness, human beings have asked the question: Why do bad things happen?

The answer that the universe is random and things “just happen” has never been satisfying. And calling it the “wrath of God” tends to destroy faith, not grow it. “You create your own reality” has always been too harsh, showing too little respect for the individual and creating enormous guilt.

There is another option: a “higher level” explanation. Five Reasons Why Bad Things Happen answers that universal question, proclaiming that all bad things can be understood and explained by five distinct reasons. And an even bolder claim: you can prevent bad things from affecting you.

There are undeniable advantages in believing things happen for a reason, and even more in understanding what those reasons are. These benefits include a greater feeling of control, infinitely more optimism, enhanced compassion, and the big kahuna: happiness.



Chapter 2: Commitment

Getting the most from this material requires a mutual commitment. On one side: honesty, research-backed support, respect for all faiths, and no pretending to understand your specific pain. On your side: an open mind, total self-honesty, and a willingness to do the thinking and self-analysis required. But the commitment gets rewarded in ways you can’t yet imagine.

“I’m trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door. You’re the one that has to walk through it.” — Morpheus, The Matrix



Chapter 3: The Basic Assumptions

Before the Five Reasons can work for you, consider these nine foundational beliefs. You don’t have to agree with every one, but you do need to be at least open to the possibility that they could be valid:

- 1. There Is a Higher Power.** Whether called God, the Divine, Infinite Intelligence, or universal energy.
- 2. God Is Love/Loving.** The Divine does not exert wrath or punishment. Love is patient, love is kind. The “Wrath of God” is an oxymoron.
- 3. Our Lives Have Purpose.** We are not here by accident.

4. Free Will. Destiny isn't fixed, but is affected by our decisions and actions. We have much more power and influence than we may realize.

5. There Is Life After Death. If our lives have reason and purpose, it follows that our souls existed before we were born and will return to another dimensional existence after we die.

6. Three Selves. Each human has three aspects: the Inner Self (subconscious/emotional body), the Outer Self (conscious/thinking mind), and the Higher Self (superconscious/spirit/soul connection to the Divine).

7. Survival of the Fittest. This biological drive explains much of human behavior, but taken too far it becomes Social Darwinism—the destructive need to subjugate others to feel powerful.

8. Evil Can Be Explained. Evil is not an external supernatural force. It is dark, destructive energy generated by collective human thoughts of anger, envy, fear, and hatred.

9. Divine Guidance Is Available. Spirit Guides, angels, and your own Higher Self are available for support, love, and direction—when you ask.



Chapters 4–5: Bad Things Defined & Understanding Your Crisis

We certainly know a bad thing when we're faced with it, because we feel it. These aren't things just happening around us, they're happening to us, within us, which means they contain physical or emotional pain, or both.

Bad things range from being cut off in traffic to terminal diagnoses, from job loss to natural disasters. What they all have in common is the application of the Five Reasons Why. No matter what happens, the same five explanations apply.

Before diagnosing which reasons apply, it's important to get clarity on the crisis itself: your role in it, the cause, the time perspective, the areas of life affected, the emotions and fears involved, and whether you're seeing repeat patterns or a downward spiral. Awareness is always the first step.

“The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance. The third step is action.” — Nathaniel Branden



Chapter 6: The Five Reasons Why

There are Five Reasons Why bad things happen:

1. Karma — cause and effect

2. Subconscious Sabotage — the hidden power of thought

3. Lessons — what Earth School is teaching you

4. Tests — how you're being measured

5. Reward — the blessing in disguise

What the Five Reasons have in common: they are all straightforward and relatable. All crises are explainable by them. All are driven by a higher purpose. It is necessary to understand them to achieve long-term healing. And the power to heal is within each of us.

Most importantly, all five reasons can be diagnosed, resolved, and used to prevent future bad things from happening.



Chapter 7: The First Reason Why: Karma

Karma is derived from Sanskrit, meaning “to do” or deed, and from Pali, meaning action, effect, or destiny. Most people think of Karma as punishment handed out by a threatening God. But if the Divine is Love, the more logical and loving explanation of Karma is to teach—to make us better people and make the world a better place. If there were no repercussions to our actions, what kind of world would we create?

“How would you live your life differently, if you instantly felt the harm you inflicted on another?”

Karma isn't necessarily instant—it can take years or even lifetimes. According to near-death experience accounts, when we die we experience a Life Review where we re-live all of our experiences not only from our own point of view, but from the perspective of everyone we interacted with. Every unkind thought and wounding action is relived from the other person's point of view. Conversely, every generous and loving act is felt from their perspective too.

Karma also operates at the group level. Family Karma can extend across generations. Group Karma explains how the decisions of leaders affect entire nations. And the “1% Solution”—research showing that when 1% of a population meditates regularly, crime drops significantly—demonstrates the flip side: group thought with positive intention is equally powerful.

“Karma is harsh in its fairness. It means that it is hopeless to drift through life waiting for the breaks to come our way. We are the breaks.” — Larry Dossey, M.D.



Chapter 8: The Second Reason Why: Subconscious Sabotage

Subconscious Sabotage is interference generated by the force of our own inner thoughts and feelings, and those of others. Unlike Karma, which involves actions and their consequences,

Subconscious Sabotage operates through the hidden power of thought and emotion—often without conscious awareness.

“When an inner situation is not made conscious, it appears outside as fate.” —
Carl Jung

It takes several forms:

Self-sabotage: Your own hidden fears, suppressed emotions, and unresolved beliefs creating negative outcomes. When you’re afraid of something and keeping it inside, other people sense it. Specific emotions produce specific destructive patterns: anger produces more anger; denial prevents healing; worry and fear bring toward you the very thing you fear.

Sabotage between individuals: Subtle negative messages or destructive behavior directed at someone else without consciously knowing it. An overprotective mother subconsciously raising a timid child. A jealous spouse unknowingly driving their partner away.

Conscious and group sabotage: Deliberate manipulation, from chain emails that threaten bad luck to political propaganda designed to inflame. Any time someone uses fear to control another person’s behavior, sabotage is at work.

The core issue is almost always a neglected Inner Self. When we don’t listen to our subconscious needs—not enough rest, not enough fun, eating poorly, suppressing emotions, covering problems with addictions—we get depression, relationship problems, weight struggles, procrastination, and chronic anxiety. The Inner Self will speak louder and louder until we’re forced to listen.

“Fear is the path to the Dark Side. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate; hate leads to suffering.” — Yoda



Chapter 9: The Third Reason Why: Lessons

Lessons are an important part of life from the first moment we’re born. Each of us has enrolled in Earth School. The campus is beautiful (except where we have destroyed it). There is a lot to learn here, and the experience is rewarding, stimulating, and exciting. But the classes can be very challenging and the teachers (each other) are often demanding. The grading system is unique in that we all evaluate our own progress and there’s no bell curve. Everyone has the potential to graduate with honors.

Earth School has a wide and varied curriculum. Many of the classes were signed up for in advance, but we forgot our major and class load once we arrived. The reason for this amnesia is so that we can be born anew, with pure innocence.

The book catalogs nearly 100 potential “classes,” including: Acceptance, Accountability, Compassion, Courage, Faith, Forgiveness, Gratitude, Happiness (functional vs. circumstantial),

Hope, Humility, Humor, Love, Patience, Risk, Self-Acceptance, Self-Control, Self-Reliance, Trust, Uniqueness, and many more.

There are seven reasons we need Lessons: (1) to change and become better people, (2) to redirect us when we're off course, (3) to keep us from getting complacent, (4) to prepare us for the future, (5) to help and care for others, (6) to make us more interesting and compassionate, and (7) to get to "ease"—the ability to know that, no matter what happens, we'll survive and thrive.

"I want to learn through Joy." — Brownell

The problem is, most of us need a little nudging—some more than others—to branch out, expand, change, and grow. That means we often need problems in order to motivate us to change. The more stuck we are in our ways, the bigger the problems can be.

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." — George Santayana



Chapter 10: The Fourth Reason Why: Tests

Earth School has Tests, too. But once you know the curriculum and material—and how you're being graded—there's no reason to be nervous. It's more like an open-book exam. The answers are everywhere and easy to access. And there isn't any stern, threatening professor waiting to judge you. Instead, you'll be evaluating yourself.

The characteristics of Earth School Tests:

- ◆ The curriculum and class schedule are pre-determined before birth.
- ◆ All exams are open-book, with answers everywhere.
- ◆ Teachers surround us—friends, colleagues, parents, children, mentors, strangers.
- ◆ All Tests are self-administered and self-graded through the Life Review.
- ◆ Tests happen for a reason: to determine if we've truly learned the Lesson.

The basic Test question in every crisis is always the same: How are you handling it? Not whether you succeed or fail at solving the external problem, but how you respond internally. Do you react with anger, blame, and victimhood? Or with acceptance, curiosity, and faith?

The difference between Lessons and Tests is like school: when you take a class and learn a Lesson, you're tested to determine whether you learned the material. The more thoroughly you learn the Lesson, the easier the Test.

"Here is the test to find whether your mission on Earth is finished: If you're alive, it isn't." — Richard Bach



Chapter 11: The Fifth Reason Why: Reward

We all know stories of people whose lives changed significantly for the better following times of crisis. Perhaps they found their true purpose. Perhaps they developed a strength they never knew they had. Or perhaps they found one of the greatest gifts of all—inner peace.

Psychologists who study responses to trauma have recognized a phenomenon called Posttraumatic Growth, where trauma survivors report positive life changes. In fact, this Reward is considerably more common and far outnumbers the experiences of other posttraumatic disorders.

The kinds of positive changes reported include improved relationships, new possibilities for one's life, greater appreciation for life, a greater sense of personal strength, and spiritual development.

“There’s no disaster that can’t be a blessing, and no blessing that can’t be a disaster.” — Richard Bach

The chapter poses a series of provocative reframes: Cancer as a gift? Job loss as a gift? Facing death as a gift? Not getting what you want as a gift? Struggle as a gift? In each case, the argument isn't that suffering is good, but that within every catastrophe lies the potential for transformation.

“Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.” — Dalai Lama

There is the potential for Reward in every catastrophe. But not everyone attains it. Why? Perhaps because they haven't ended the karmic cycle, eliminated the Subconscious Sabotage, learned the Lesson, or passed the Test. Sometimes the Reward isn't recognized and other times it isn't appreciated.



Chapter 12: The Big Reason Why: Change

All Five Reasons share a single unifying purpose: change.

The purpose of Karma is to teach the repercussions of our actions, so we'll know how to be more conscientious and understanding. Subconscious Sabotage shows us the power of our inner thoughts, so we can harness that power constructively. Lessons guide us toward improving our lives. Tests make sure we're on the right track. And Reward is the result of having changed from the inside and then making a difference to the outside world.

It's up to us whether we change for the better or not. We can become bitter or better.

“I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it.” —
Maya Angelou

If you find any resistance to this material, consider whether you might be embracing a victim mentality. Sometimes it's easier to be a victim than to change. But if it's someone else's fault, then there's no room for you to change, and the problems will continue. It takes work. But it's a lot more fun to embrace change than it is to avoid it.



Chapters 13–15: Diagnosis, Remedy & What Needs to Change

Once you understand the Five Reasons, the next step is diagnosing which ones apply to your specific situation. Most crises involve more than one reason—Karma and Lessons often travel together, and Reward frequently hides inside Tests.

The remedy involves tools for each reason: resolving past Karma through forgiveness and making amends; healing Subconscious Sabotage by befriending and listening to your Inner Self; absorbing the Lessons so they don't need to repeat; recognizing what the Tests are measuring; and opening yourself to see the Reward.

The Circles of Control framework helps sort what you can control (your effort, goals, attention, behavior, emotions), what you can influence (opportunities, health, time, outcomes), and what's outside your control (the economy, natural disasters, other people's choices). For things in your control: act. For things you can influence: understand. For things outside your control: prepare.



Chapter 16: Spiritual Darwinism: Preventing Future Bad Things

Spiritual Darwinism is a proposed new approach to Survival of the Fittest: the strongest and most powerful strength one can have is a close spiritual connection. With this ability, each of us can not only survive and thrive as individuals, but also ensure the endurance of the human race.

Prevention comes from applying each of the Five Reasons proactively: Resolve all past Karma and prevent creating new negative Karma by asking, “Am I doing my very best? Am I asking for Divine Guidance? Am I staying connected to my three Selves?” Stop Subconscious Sabotage by getting integrated and aligned. Embrace Lessons willingly so the nudges don't have to become shoves. Pass Tests with ease. And look for Reward in everything—even a traffic slowdown might prevent an accident.

The chapter also introduces “Integrated Alignment”—the state where your Inner Self, Outer Self, and Higher Self work in harmony, and you no longer need to distinguish which motivation belongs to which self. They're all one.

“Please help me learn through Joy.”

The best way to prevent bad things is to remember to enjoy life. Recognizing what makes you and your Inner Self happy is crucial in preventing crises of all kinds.



Chapters 17–18: Prayer & Forgiveness

Prayer works best when it follows certain principles: pray from a place of love, not fear. Ask for guidance rather than specific outcomes. Release attachment to how the answer arrives. And remember that “Seek and ye shall find” applies to every belief system—assistance is available, although not necessarily in the form requested.

Forgiveness is one of the most powerful tools for healing. When we’re reluctant to forgive, our Inner Self is holding onto emotions we need to face, feel, and free—whether they’re resentment, guilt, blame, anger, or fear. Forgiveness isn’t letting someone off the hook. It’s releasing yourself from the karmic cycle of harm returning to harm.

Making amends—both giving and receiving—is a wonderful way to alleviate anger, resolve Karma, and end Subconscious Sabotage from others.

“If there is only one Lesson, it is Love. If there is only one Solution, it is Love.”



Chapter 19: Helping Others

Once you understand the Five Reasons Why, you’re better equipped to help others through their crises—with compassion rather than platitudes, with understanding rather than judgment, and with practical wisdom rather than “life sucks.”

But be careful: never judge whether someone else “deserves” their Karma. Never interfere with someone else’s Lessons. Every time we judge others, we create negative Karma for ourselves. The goal is to offer understanding, acceptance, and love—and to share the framework so others can find their own answers.



The Bottom Line

Everything happens for one of Five Reasons: Karma, Subconscious Sabotage, Lessons, Tests, or Reward. The Big Reason behind all five is Change.

Understanding these reasons gives you something the three conventional explanations never could: the ability to diagnose why your crisis happened, resolve it at the root level, and prevent

future tragedies from affecting you. Not by pretending the pain isn't real, but by insisting there's meaning inside it.

Live, Learn, and Love!

For the full book, workbook exercises, and more:

<https://reasonswhy.com/>

[**brownellandrums.com**](https://brownellandrums.com)