



Think Outside the Box

When the old ways no longer suit modern needs

Times are hard, yes. The world has never experienced the problems that coronavirus served up on such a massive scale. Some tried to carry on as usual, but before long it was obvious that wasn't going to work. Fortunately, humans have the intelligence and capacity to adapt when the need arises; and most are able to muddle through. It does take something extra, though – an awareness that things have changed and we all have to start thinking outside our own comfortable boxes.

Many years ago we did that on numerous occasions, initially emigrating from our birthplace to start again in Australia. We'd heard it was called the lucky country, and it certainly was for us. Continuing pretty much as before, our jobs were familiar, making the transition relatively easy; but there came a time when the stress of the weekly routine was too hard to cope with. So we packed up the cars and headed off, not knowing what awaited us; only that we would do our best to fit in with whatever was on offer. Leaving the rat-race behind, we settled in a country town in Central Queensland. Farming was something I knew nothing about, but it was the only work available. This was how I came to know a man who refused to give up, despite being faced with a dismal financial climate. He was also crippled by polio; but he'd had it since childhood and it had never stopped him doing what he had to.

His family business was cattle, both dairy and meat; the latter, however, was bringing in very little moneywise at the time. Although he had already planted some banana palms and paw-paw trees, he decided to turn part of his acreage over to small crops like beans and tomatoes. His mates, all cattle men, said he was crazy and even claimed he was being unfaithful to his true calling. When I asked him how he felt about being a local laughing stock, he said: "They're the ones who are into the banks, but I don't need hefty loans to pay *my* bills." That was his simple philosophy – do whatever it takes to survive. To this day he is still keeping on keeping on, having diversified further into pigs, egg production and honey from his bee hives. Here's one good man who will never stop thinking outside his box.

Most of us are more fortunate, having the physical and mental ability to cope with everyday living. Some though, may start out this way; then they contract an illness or suffer an accident that suddenly disadvantages them like never before. The loss of limbs and paralysis, sight impairment and restricted mobility deliver a blow that would knock anyone for six; but these people refuse to give up. They think outside the box – I can't do what I used to in the same way that I always could; so what *can* I do? We've

seen them competing in the Paralympics; learning new skills that they can perform in spite of their disabilities; and in many instances they put the able-bodied to shame.

Life wasn't meant to be easy; and if it always tends to be a struggle and something comes along to make it even worse, there seems to be little point in continuing; but giving up shouldn't be an option; not for humans, anyway. We're a stubborn species. We are generally open to take on the challenge; and because we have this need to win, we'll put every effort into beating the odds.

Taking time to analyse the problem in order to find a solution is what we do best. Being laid off or made redundant is a shock to anyone's system, especially early on in a person's working life and with a family to support. There is usually something else, though; another occupation that might not have been considered when everything was rosy. Here's just the time to think seriously about taking that new road. It may even lead to a better destination than the old one.

Whatever occurs, however much we seem to be stuck behind the eight ball, there's always a way out. It might be extremely difficult, perhaps risky, and any future success seemingly hopeless; but the scheme of things is not decreed by fate: it's what we make it. All that's needed is a long hard look outside the box; then accepting the alternative and plucking up the courage to give it a go.

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