

*If you only have a minute: Rooted and unwavering is all about connecting deeply with ourselves, others and our service in the world. When faced with hardship, we have an opportunity dig deep for the strength and courage to do great things.*

## Thanks to War

By Esther Groves and Hylke Faber

*“When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.” – Victor E. Frankl*

Zoya Lytvyn, founder and leader of the NGO Osvitoria, knows she is much stronger now than she ever thought possible.

Born in the Ukraine and raised by strong women - her mother and grandmother - Zoya has been tested in ways that most of us can't imagine. Early one morning, she and her family were startled awake when Russian bombs shattered the windows of their home.

At first she froze – overtaken by fear and depression – unable to think or act rationally for several days. Then she remembered the children – her own and those enrolled the school she leads – and knew she had to do something. She reconnected with her courage and found strength she didn't know she had. In fact, she often starts her sentences with, “Thanks to war...”

Most of us will never experience war so directly. But our challenges are just as real to us. They can trigger us to fight, flee, or freeze in fear. Or, to dig deep for the courage that lies in each of us, and respond rather than react to the threat.

What is the thing that is bigger than you that reminds you of your strength and purpose in the face of obstacles? Perhaps it's your family, your life's mission, or a higher power that brings you back into the light where you can see the path forward.

Zoya chose optimism. Once she worked through her fear and remembered her purpose, she became present to her experience and her life's work, all the while her country remains under attack. She reminds the children and her team that, although they can't control their circumstances, they can regulate their thoughts and responses. They can become curious about what is happening around them and perhaps discover a new way of interacting with their circumstances.

Currently, Zoya's team provides education online to over 500,000 children in grades K-12 in the Ukraine and other countries where their families have become refugees. As Zoya points out, your education is unassailable. Once you acquire skills and knowledge, no one can take them from you.

What challenges have changed you? How have life's adversities have made you strong? What events have prompted you to say, “Thanks to (fill in the blank) I am more aware, courageous, grateful than I've ever been before”?

*“The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.”*

- Ernest Hemingway