

Hello. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in.

This week I want to talk about the value of pain and suffering. I've talked about this book before, 'The Subtle Art of Not Giving a ...', I almost said it. The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Blank, a counterintuitive approach to living a good life by Mark Manson. I like this book. I've recommended it before. I've shared with my children, and I actually subscribed to his blog, which I think is sort of counterintuitive ... I think he uses that word, counterintuitive wisdom that I pretty much like.

I may have said in a blog previously that there was this guy, this philosopher named Malcolm Muggeridge who died some time ago, but he was a very wise man. He said, in so many words, I'm paraphrasing here. He said, "We only learn when we're miserable." And, I've always thought that to be true.

Think about your own family business experience. Do you feel like you learned more about yourself and your business during the great recession, or when things were booming from 2002 to 2008? Where did you learn more? I mean, I'm willing to bet that you learned infinitely more during the time of the great recession about yourself, your business, what's actually needed and necessary in your business to grow and prosper.

Mark Manson makes that point with respect to the greatest generation, the World War II generation. He talks about a psychologist who studied people who came back from the great war, and obviously these people had seen things that, man, they couldn't have imagined when they left the farm, right? "But their wartime experiences had actually caused them to become better, more responsible, and even happier people." They described themselves sort of in before and after context. "Before, they'd been ungrateful and unappreciative of their loved ones, lazy, and consumed by petty problems, entitled to all they'd been given. After the war, they felt more confident, more sure of themselves, more grateful, and unfazed by life's trivialities and petty annoyances."

Well, you can see that. That makes perfect sense if you're living through life and death situations on a daily basis. All of the other little things tend to go away. I was thinking about this in the context of my own children and this millennial generation that's coming along that so many employers struggle with, where these kids are as described. They're entitled, they're unappreciative, and those kinds of things.

But Manson goes on, and he says that, "Fear and anxiety and sadness are not undesirable or unhelpful states of mind. They're representative of the necessary pain of psychological growth. Just as one must suffer physical pain to build stronger bone and muscle, one must suffer emotional pain to develop greater emotional resilience, a stronger sense of self, increased compassion, and a generally happier life." So, if you think those things are true, and I do happen to subscribe to that philosophy, we're not always doing our young people, whether they're your family or just young people in general in your business, any favors by making things too easy for them.

I don't want to throw my wife under the bus, but last night, she literally looked at my daughter at dinner -- my 20-year-old daughter who's an incredible woman in her own right -- she looked at her and said, "Do you want

me to cut up your meat for you?" I almost fell out of my chair, because we've already spoiled these children. Why would we continue to spoil a 20-year-old who's perfectly darn capable of slicing up her own chicken? I mean, really, but that's what we do as moms and dads in this generation.

You're not doing your young people in your family business any favors by making it easy on them. Throw them in the deep end of the pool and let them sink or swim. Give them challenging projects. See what they're capable of, because if you continue to spoil them and carry them and do things for them and make all their decisions for them, you're just making them children. To her credit, my daughter looked at my wife, and ... I mean, really, it was a pretty funny moment.

But anyhow, the point of all this is we only learn when we're miserable, so make your people miserable by giving them challenging projects and pushing them a little bit so they'll realize their own potential. It'll be a huge benefit for you. It'll be a much bigger benefit for them.

This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you.