

# *These Are the BEST of Times!*

By Gary Winters

It's tough out there!

Three recent headlines are all too common:

*Unemployment at record high*

*One in ten Americans are in default, behind in their payments, or in foreclosure*

*Stock market slide worst in thirty years*



For the first time in my career, I cannot think of a single client who is not dealing with enormous financial and other issues. Indeed, I face them myself. The public sector is rapidly running out of reserves, cutting services, scrambling to stay solvent. The private sector is no better off – the collapse of the real estate market, the banks and the auto industry has led to frightening consequences across the board – in retail, manufacturing, and even the service industry.

*No one is immune.*

I still insist that these are the best of times. Things are terrible, and they'll probably get worse. People are frightened, discouraged, angry and depressed. It seems almost every day we move further into uncharted waters where we've never gone before.

But that's not true – we've been here before. We were in uncharted waters in 1776, in 1860, in 1932. The circumstances may have been different, but we've here many times and we've always survived – in fact, we've always thrived. We did it before, and we'll do it now.

What will get us through these dark days is not the perfect recovery plan, the ideal investment strategy, or the most comprehensive legislation. What will get us through is leadership – leadership on the world stage, and everyday leadership by folks like you and me.

*And if you're a leader, you can't ask for a better climate to practice your craft.* As Bernice Johnson Reagon says, "Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you, they're supposed to help you discover who you are."

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Like everyone else, I cannot predict when brighter days will come, when financial stability will be restored, and when people will experience a deep sense of optimism, faith and stability in our systems. But that day will come.

### *Three Suggestions*

In the meantime, I have three suggestions for all of us right now:

- 1. Take time for self care.** The airlines have it right when they tell you to put on your own oxygen mask first before helping someone else. You can't lead well if you're neglecting yourself. Pay special attention to your diet, exercise, and rest.
- 2. Monitor your self talk.** Become aware of any negative self talk patterns. No need to beat yourself up over them; they happen; they're natural (especially in times like these!). When they happen, accept that you've slipped into negative self talk, and make a conscious positive affirmation. For me, right now, it's as simple as reminding myself: "These are the best of times." Remember, as one wag said, "These are the times we'll look back upon someday as the good old days."
- 3. Take time for self-development.** Become aware of what skills you want to improve, and find a way to improve them! Find a mentor, take a seminar, read a book, join a group of colleagues, whatever. Whatever your liabilities as a leader, they will magnify

under these conditions. If there was ever a time to take your leadership practice to another level – this is it!

Someone once said, "Crises bring out the best in the best of us, and the worst in the worst of us." Bring out your best, focus on the positive, and lead those around you to a better world That's your job, and you can do it.

After all, these are the best of times!

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