



Hope 4 Hardship Roots

Hope 4 Hardship's Michael Russell has waded deeply, in, around and through the very path you find yourself on today. For all accounts and from the outside looking in, he had it all; a college education, a caring wife, a successful family real estate business, a healthy family and every imaginable opportunity to build upon that foundation.

Unfortunately, his refusal to learn the value of the dollar created and engrained a wholly unrealistic entitlement to an excessive lifestyle. Eventually this entitlement led to overwhelming financial problems, divorce, foreclosure, short sales, bankruptcies and the worst consequence we can ever face; crippling shame borne of the complete deterioration of each relationship we held dear.

That lengthy, pain riddled path forged a concrete understanding of one inalienable truth for Michael; money was neither the problem nor the solution. No one could have convinced him of that while he was embroiled in the uncertainty and stresses of financial ruin, but with hindsight he can now see the true crux of the struggle was his decision-making paradigm. An immensely flawed process of choices made up for both self-serving and self-seeking purpose.

Along the way and into the path of financial ruin, these poor choices masked themselves as, solvable with money. He would convince himself every day that money would fix everything. But having, finding, winning or asking for money to solve the financial problems would not have solved his decision-making flaws. No, money would have only bailed him out of the struggle temporarily.

Of course, that dream of money magically appearing to remedy the problems would never materialize into reality. Knowing very little about how to best navigate financial struggle back then, Michael would end up with the worst results possible. Bankrupt, foreclosed, uncertain, afraid and extended suffering for many more years to come. He became quite adept at blaming everyone and everything but himself.

He was forced out of his home into living conditions he despised, his credit sank to the floor and again, the most painful of the consequences would linger; family trust, relations and sanctity, shattered.

It would take the better part of decade to mend these problems. The financial turnaround would prove to be awe inspiring; the restoration of family relationships became the most valuable journey of Michael's life. It was only then that he would begin to recognize a path to continue mending his own

heart. The path so simple; to give freely to others, the invaluable knowledge that he had gained since his own struggles. To help people avoid making the wrong decisions while facing financial hardship, like he did. Because after all, the one thing that cannot be faked is the power of shared struggle.

And so Hope4Hardship would be born.

The rest of Michael's story

Once Michael was finally finished feeling sorry for himself, he went to work doing everything he could to save his family's real estate company from the trials of bankruptcy. He became a voracious reader and researcher, he became obsessive in his quest for knowledge about how the banking world works, what laws there are to protect homeowners in America, what policies mortgage companies follow, which types of loans offer which types of assistance for hardships and what agencies provide funding to assist in homeowner assistance. His desire to learn how to never end up where he once was becoming all consuming.

In the beginning of this quest, he was consuming knowledge just for himself. He never would have guessed the quest would have led him here. But, as time went on, he began to see first-hand that he was nowhere close to the only American facing these sorts of struggles with their mortgage company. His company alone worked with thousands of people in the purchase and sale of real estate, the seeking of financing and a percentage of just those people would end up in a financial struggle. He began to think of the 5 million people in Massachusetts who held a mortgage and how many of them end up facing struggle, how many of them would also make poor decisions under the pressure of financial ruin.

He separated his focus from his traditional real estate company a little bit, to form a non-profit whose sole mission is to help consult and guide people caught in a struggle of their own. Quite quickly he would learn that each year thousands of homeowners in Massachusetts find themselves in default with their mortgage company. A vast majority of those suffer from feelings of helplessness, uncertainty and fear. Many of whom often choose a poor path and end up in foreclosure or bankruptcy while worsening their situation, just like he did.

Through his own personal experience, he possesses great and genuine empathy for those on a path of financial hardship, combining that with his 30 years of real estate experience and insatiable quest for solutions; Michael offers a unique tool set that works to both comprehend and help solve struggle.

His goal is to help people maintain a softer landing than he had. He helps people seek alternative solutions to foreclosure and bankruptcy. This path of giving back freely and paying it forward to the next person in need of guidance, helps him continue to heal from his own struggles.

Foreclosure is one of the worst things Michael ever experienced. He lost total control and became beholden to abandoning his home on someone else's terms and in someone else's timeframe. Foreclosure is almost always avoidable.

Bankruptcy comes in a close second on the scale of worst things to experience. Going through both within a year was a brutal dose of the harsh realities on how landlords, banks, credit card companies, insurance companies and the like, look at us as consumers.

He's seen too many people file bankruptcy to stop a foreclosure, only to end up being foreclosed on soon thereafter once the cure and maintain period calls for strict and timely payments.

Even loan modifications in this interest rate environment can create more problems than solutions. So many Americans are in a sub-4% fixed mortgage product, so modifying that loan to a higher interest rate can often lead to bigger problems and a foreclosure in the future.

Every bank offers solutions, the key is knowing how to ask, apply for and qualify for a solution that makes the most sense for you. Michael understands how easy it can feel to simply ignore the mortgage company, he himself had 2 years of unopened mail on his dining room table. He also knows from experience that time is the enemy in these hardships and the sooner you pick up the phone and begin constructive discussions with your bank, the more likely a positive solution is attainable.

For starters, that is precisely what Michael helps people do, first he helps people sort of get out of their own way, then he helps you begin constructive discussions with your bank. He can do this on a 3-way call, in person at your home or in the privacy of Michael's office. He will coach you prior to the calls and speak on your behalf with your permission.

The depth of your struggle, how long it lasts and how bad it becomes is completely dependent on you and how long you will wait before you begin facing this head on.

Hope4Harship will *never ask you for money*, everything we do is *free of charge*. We understand there are people and firms out there that wish to charge you for help filling out assistance applications or communicating and negotiating with your bank. Michael's personal and professional experience make those things both deeply meaningful and terribly easy for him, so before you pay money you don't have to seek solutions, give Mike and his team a call and experience what paying it forward is meant to feel like.

Contact us

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