

01

The Problem Is a Tiny Dot in the Universe

No matter who you are, no matter where your strength or confidence comes from, I believe there must be days when the obstacle in front of you feels like a towering wall, so steep and imposing that it completely blocks out any view of happiness.

And it can make you feel incredibly small.

In the darkest moments like this, I often perform a small personal ritual. I take out the photograph called “The Pale Blue Dot” and look at it.

This is the historic image taken by Voyager 1 when it turned its camera back toward Earth on February 14, 1990, while the spacecraft was heading out of the solar system, about six billion kilometers from the sun.

In the image captured by the camera, there is only the vast darkness of open space, and a faint blue dot, smaller than a single pixel, floating in the middle of the void.

This photograph does not stand out because of 4K sharpness or beautiful colors. It stands out because of the truth it gives us.

It serves to “zoom out” for us humans, allowing us to sense the true scale of ourselves in comparison with the universe.

It also inspired the great astronomer Carl Sagan to write a golden line in his book *Pale Blue Dot*, a line that made the whole world pause and think.

“Look again at that dot. That’s here. That’s home. That’s us.”

That image is not far removed from my own life at all.

I think back to the time when I applied to study computer science at the University of Washington in Seattle, a top 20 university in the United States with extremely fierce competition, where the number of people who got in was incomparable to the number of people who were disappointed.

And I had staked my entire life on that dream.

I was so anxious I could not eat or sleep. Even though I had prepared as well as I possibly could, the voice in my head kept haunting me, saying that if I did not get in, my

life would be over. In the end, I had to call my dad in Thailand and pour it all out to him.

He listened quietly, then said,

“You won’t die if you don’t get in, son. There are hundreds of universities in the world. Find another one. Try stepping back a little. Look at it from a bit farther away. Sometimes a problem looks as huge as the sky because we have our face pressed right up against it.”

My dad’s words that day were truly like cold water splashed onto my face. Once I stepped back and zoomed out a little, the world that had seemed as if it was about to collapse suddenly looked calmer.

Sometimes the problem you think is unbearable may not always be as enormous as you believe. It may simply be that you are standing too close to it.

Ryan Holiday, a writer and thinker on Stoicism, recommends a technique called “the view from above.” It is an excellent tool for regaining your senses and reminding yourself just how small you really are.

Many things we treat as desperately important are, in truth, only important on the small scale of our own lives.

Of course, this technique will not make pain, debt, or relationship problems vanish. But it is a psychological

mechanism that helps a panicked mind regain its footing and return to clarity.

The method is simple. Close your eyes and imagine the problem you are facing right now. For example, picture yourself sitting anxiously, holding your head in front of a computer screen after your boss has written to criticize you about a project that has just fallen apart. Feel the heat rising inside you, or your pulse beating fast.

Then imagine yourself slowly floating higher and higher until you reach the ceiling. Look down and see yourself as just one person sitting in front of a computer screen.

Now float even higher, through the roof and up into the sky.

When you look down, you will no longer see only yourself. You will see colleagues in other departments who are also stressed about their own work. You will see people on the streets rushing somewhere, a couple arguing in a car, someone who has won the lottery jumping with joy on a street corner, and an ambulance running a red light to save someone's life.

As you zoom out farther, until you see countries, continents, oceans, storms forming, and wars erupting on the other side of the world, you will see love, death, birth, and destruction. You will see the stories of all

humanity unfolding at the same time, in the same fraction of a second.

Finally, when you zoom out far enough to reach the scale of the universe, the entire Earth becomes nothing more than a faint blue dot amid the vast emptiness, just like in *The Pale Blue Dot*.

From that point, observe everything without judgment. Then slowly zoom back in, back to your desk, back to the problem in front of you, and ask yourself again,

“Is that email, that criticism, or that mistake truly big enough to destroy my life, or am I simply standing too close to it?”

Zooming out is not “running away from the problem.” It is “taking a breath so you can regain your footing.” It is stepping back to see the bigger picture, to notice which variables are beyond your control, and to ask yourself,

“One year from now, or ten years from now, will the thing that is making me cry or stress out today still matter?”

02

Flow Like a Jazz Musician

In 2025, as the editor of the aomMONEY page, I was partly responsible for a major event called Work Life Festival, held at Samyan Mitrtown.

My duties covered everything from selecting speakers, planning topics, holding meetings, and arranging the schedule, to making sure the flow of discussion throughout the event ran smoothly.

For just one event, we spent nearly three months preparing. Every detail had to be covered. Nothing could be missed.

And I learned one truth about life.

“No matter how well we plan, we can never defeat the uncertainty of this world.”

This event was the clearest example of that.

November 8, 2025, should have been a day when everything went smoothly according to plan. But then an unexpected variable appeared.

It was not a storm. It was not a technical failure.

It was the phenomenon known as “Monthong Fever.”

Monthong here does not refer to the durian variety, but to the football team from Monthong Wittaya School, a dark horse team that stunned the experts by defeating a giant team that had previously won the Channel 7 football championship. They became a nationwide sensation, the kind of team everyone wanted to cheer for.

And the coincidence that felt as though the heavens had sent it to test us was this. The championship match happened to take place at Suphachalasai Stadium, less than two kilometers away from our event venue.

I started seeing bad signs that morning. Traffic was already terrible. I knew right away that the day would not be easy, because the slots at our event were similar to TED Talks, fifteen minutes per speaker, with almost no breaks in between. The speaking schedule was short and fast paced. If just one person was late, the whole board of dominoes could come crashing down.

In the end, the bad day really did happen. One of the speakers was still stuck on the road and would need almost forty more minutes to arrive.

The team and I brainstormed intensely. Letting another speaker go up first risked affecting audience members who had come specifically to listen to speakers according to the schedule. Going up to fill the time ourselves was also risky, because there was almost no one who could hold the audience's attention.

While I was hesitating, I decided to walk over to Nack, the creator of the channel Nack Siwakorn, who was scheduled to go on right after the speaker who had not yet arrived.

“Nack, could I ask you for a favor? Could you stretch your session from fifteen minutes to thirty?”

Nack smiled and answered immediately, “Of course, Phi Oh. I'll handle it.”

At that moment, I wanted to bow down to him in gratitude.

Nack went onstage and did an excellent job. He did not speak just to stall for time. He was able to hold the audience's attention throughout his entire session.

Just as he was about to finish, the next speaker arrived. I switched that person in for the speaker still stuck on the road. After that, everything slowly fell back into place, and the event ended well, though not without plenty of moments that made us wipe sweat from our brows.

That day made me think of the concept of “Provocative Competence” by Frank J. Barrett, a professor of management and a jazz pianist.

Barrett explains that in the world of business or work, where uncertainty is everywhere, clinging too tightly to the “musical notes” or to a strictly written plan can lead us into a dead end when unexpected situations arise.

But chaos does not always come to harm us. Sometimes it pulls us out of familiar patterns and opens the door for us to see choices that were never part of the plan.

And the essential skill for moments like these is the ability to transform mistakes creatively.

When jazz musicians encounter a situation where the music or rhythm changes, they do not see it as a mistake that must be fixed immediately. They tend to embrace that wrong note and use it as raw material to create a new melody that may be even more beautiful than before.

What Nack did that day reflected this idea clearly. He did not see the extra time as a problem. He saw it as space for creativity.

He did not reject the disruption. He accepted it and turned the mistake into part of a complete performance.

From that lesson, I tried combining it with the mindset of jazz musicians and summarized it into three simple steps for dealing with the unexpected.

1. Practice thinking “Yes, and...”

When a problem arises, our first human instinct is to deny it, complain about it, and get stuck on the question of “why.”

“Why does the traffic have to be this bad right now?”

“Why didn’t the speaker arrive on time?”

But questions like that do not take us anywhere.

Try shifting to the mindset of a jazz musician. Accept that it has already happened, then ask what you can do with it. Quickly accepting reality helps bring your awareness back to the present and moves you away from being trapped by what cannot be changed, toward finding a solution instead.

2. Focus on what you have, not what you lack

In an emergency, we often look for what we are missing, such as a speaker who has not arrived or time that is running out, until we forget to look at what is already in front of us.

For me, the most valuable resource at that moment was not the script we had prepared. It was Nack, standing right there.

So try scanning your surroundings. Sometimes the solution to a problem may be one small person, a simple tool, or even a few minutes of time that we have overlooked.

3. Play the supporting role well

In a jazz band, while someone is playing a solo, the others do not stop playing. They perform what is called “comping,” from “accompanying” and “complementing.” They support the melody, keep the rhythm, and help the soloist shine as much as possible.

When an event hits a snag, the team needs people like that too. We need people who ask, “Is there anything I can help with?” “Let me know if anything is missing,” or

who quietly help coordinate things behind the scenes. We need that more than people trying to steal the spotlight or simply standing around giving orders.

Solving an immediate problem is not about using one person's talent alone. It is about working together as a team.

This experience taught me that professionalism is not measured by how brilliant we are at planning. It is measured by how well we respond when the plan falls apart.

Because truly capable people can pick up the broken pieces, put them back together, and keep playing until they become a beautiful melody in the middle of everyone else's panic.