



Coping With Difficult Situations

Remember, Distress is Time Limited

Think of the last time you dealt with something incredibly difficult or painful, and how it felt like the situation would never end or that you would never be okay again. Somehow, you made it through. Maybe you don't know how, but you made it through. You've survived 100% of your worst days so far, and in time, you can learn to cope with the current situation.

Ask yourself...

- About how long (days or weeks) will the extreme distress last before it settles down into a dull ache?
- About how long (weeks or months) will the dull ache last before it becomes more of a memory?

Put the situation into Perspective

Ask yourself, despite the situation...

- For what am I still grateful?
- What is still good about me as a person and what is still good about my life?
- What are the things I will still accomplish in life (good career, nice house, etc.)?
- What are the positive experiences I will still have in the future (marriage, travel, etc.)?
- What still makes me feel happy and/or fulfilled in life?

Ask yourself...

- How long will it take before the situation is resolved or I find a new sense of normal?
- In the long-run, how will this experience help me to grow?

Keep your thoughts Balanced and Truthful

In response to stressors and challenging situations, you are likely to be your own worst critic. You may tell yourself that the situation is awful, you can't cope or won't make it through, or that you should feel really bad about yourself and your choices. However, you would never say these same pessimistic and hurtful things to someone you care about if they were in a similar situation. If these thoughts are not true for your loved ones, they are not true for you.

Ask yourself...

- What would I tell my best friend in this situation (whatever you share is likely true for you too)?
- What is a more positive, optimistic and/or hopeful way to view the situation?
- How can I view myself (or the situation) with kindness and compassion?

Focus less on the stressor and more on Solving the Problem

Brainstorm a list of possible solutions, analyze the pros and cons of each option and make a plan (it's best to do all of this in writing versus just in your head). You may not come up with a great solution, but at least you can rest assured that you are doing everything you can.

Remember that sometimes, "acceptance" of a situation is the best (or only) solution. Acceptance doesn't mean you are okay with the situation, it just means you are choosing to remove the situation's power over your life.

Remember, You Are More Than This One Situation

Make sure you take time away from the problem or situation and do the things that help you feel normal and in control (cook dinner, go for a walk, play a game, etc.). As much as possible, stick to your normal routine and take care of yourself physically (eat right, go to bed on time, exercise and limit your use of substances). It's all about balance, so make sure you spend time with the people you care about and do the things that make you feel happy.

Seek support from Family, Friends and/or Counselors

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Managing Stress Through Meditation

An ancient technique practiced in many Eastern traditions, meditation is now known to be an effective way of coping with daily stress. There are many ways to meditate. Try this method, which focuses on breathing.



- 1) Choose a quiet room that's not too brightly lit. The best times to do meditation are before breakfast and before dinner, but any time will do. Try a short five-minute session at first and gradually work up to 20 minutes or more at a sitting.
- 2) Sit upright in a straight chair, with your spine erect, your shoulders in line with your ears, and your chin tucked in—as if there were a string attached to the top of your head pulling you upright. Feet should be flat on the floor (or your legs gently crossed), your hands resting in your lap. Rock back and forth until you feel your posture is centered and balanced. Direct your eyes toward a spot on the floor a few feet in front of you, and let your eyelids slowly close. Keep your body perfectly still unless you need to shift because of pain or discomfort.
- 3) Start with some deep breathing: Inhale normally and exhale deeply, letting all the breath flow out. Pause, then inhale, letting the breath flow in naturally. Use the muscles of your abdomen rather than your chest to breathe.
- 4) Now allow your breathing to become natural and somewhat slow, as though you were settling down to sleep. Each time you exhale, count from 1 to 10. If thoughts enter your mind and you forget to count, simply notice and dismiss the thoughts, then begin again at “one.” Do the same with sounds and bodily sensations: simply notice and dismiss them.
- 5) If you wish to time your meditation, listen to calming music or follow a guided meditation, a variety of apps (such as “Insight Timer”) are available for download. When you’ve finished meditating, rock gently back and forth before slowly getting up.

Let Thoughts Pass Through

Many thoughts will enter your mind as you meditate. Don't try to stop them, but don't follow them either. Just let them pass through. Some people like to keep a note pad next to them in case a thought arises that needs to be remembered—for instance, a chore that you had forgotten or a solution to a problem that's been plaguing you.

A Gentle Process

You may not notice any particular effect from meditation at first. The key is to do it regularly, day after day. Think of drops of water slowly wearing away a mountain of anxiety. Your family or friends may be the first to notice a difference. Gradually, you'll find yourself getting more centered and more capable of calmly facing the many stresses of your busy life.

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