



Techniques for Surviving a Life Crisis

Death of a loved one, losing your job, ending your marriage, facing a devastating illness—sooner or later almost all of us undergo a life crisis. Here are five simple techniques—attitudes, really—that can help you recover and become a productive member of your community.

Reach Out for Help

When you're in the depths of crisis, it's hard to imagine that anyone else could care or understand your suffering. Yet reaching out to others is crucial in this time. Talk to your friends, pastor, therapist or family. Use community hotlines when friends are not available. Get in a support group, if possible. When a crisis seems unendurable, communicating with others who have walked your path is wonderfully healing.

Take Charge

It's natural to feel like a helpless victim after a devastating crisis. But you can't recover from grief until you overcome these feelings. In the midst of your sorrow, make a plan to take charge of your life. It may begin with something as simple as resolving to get out of bed each day and eat a meal. Or pledging to check in with a friend daily. The goal is to take responsibility for putting your life back together.

Find a Purpose

It's hard to go on when life has no purpose. Those who pick up the pieces and go on most quickly are those who find in their experience a reason for going on. One woman who was devastated by her son's mental illness began volunteering for the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. Her work gave her a purpose and made a difference in many people's lives.

Move Beyond Self-Blame

When a marriage crumbles, a job is lost, a loved one dies or a child suffers a debilitating illness, people tend to blame themselves—"If only I had worked harder" or "If only I had taken better care of him." None of us gets through life without some mistakes. You may share some of the responsibility for the crisis or, more likely, it would have happened no matter what you did. Either way, the important thing is what you do with the rest of your life. When recovering from a life crisis, self-blame is a luxury you can't afford.

Help Others

When you fill a need in others, life tends to regain its meaning. Find a need in your family or community and resolve to do something about it. Visit a senior center. Work with a teen drug program. Finding a reason to get up in the morning is always easier when someone awaits your help.

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