

START over

Create the life YOU want



A Goodlife ZEN Publication

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Step 1: Weather the Storm

When your life changes abruptly, it can be like a huge storm that shakes you to the core. Your first task is to weather the storm that has happened to you. In Step 1 you will learn to cope with shock, avoid emotional meltdown, and alleviate stress.



When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.

~ Henry Ford

How to cope with shock

Every adversity, every failure, every heartache carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit

, - Napoleon Hill

Sometimes our life changes profoundly from one moment to the next. When that happens, it can be a shock.

A shock can leave you stunned, absorbed, and unable to focus on anything else. It's important to be compassionate and kind to yourself when you are suffering from shock. Your map of the world has suddenly been blown apart and it takes time to comprehend how everything has changed. Here are five things that will help you to cope with shock:

1. Keep warm.

When you experience shocking news, your body may get very cold and you start to tremble and shiver. Make sure you feel comfortably warm. Rug up if you need to.

2. Let others care for you.

When you are in a crisis situation, it's important to allow others to care for you. Ring friends and family to be with you. Let them know what you need from them.

3. Seek medical help if necessary.

If you are totally falling apart emotionally, or can't eat or sleep over several days, seek out a physician for help.

4. Talk to friends.

Let it all hang out in front of your friends. When you are in crisis, this will help you to regain a measure of overview.

5. Don't make big decisions.

When you are still in shock, it's a bad time to make decisions. Defer any decision until you feel more in control

How a brave woman overcame a scary diagnosis

Here is the story of Courtney Carver who writes the blog [Be More With Less](#). Read how Courtney overcame the shock of a scary diagnosis and rebuilt her life.

The most catastrophic time in my life was being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in the summer of 2006.

Ironically, I was training for the MS 150, a fundraising bike ride in Salt Lake City. The owner of my company has MS and inspired me to raise money for the National MS Society. He has been in wheelchair for more than 20 years and I was going to ride for him. He was my face of MS. During that time, I had just returned from a trip to Germany and what I thought was a little jet lag turned into a lot of vertigo. I had experienced vertigo before and I figured it was just some type of ear infection. My doctor thought the same thing.

As the weeks progressed, I couldn't walk a straight line let alone ride a bike. Two months later, I still felt like I was stumbling out of a bar whenever I stood up and went back to the doctor. In the beginning of July, I had missed the MS ride, still could not get on my bike, went through a battery of tests, and was diagnosed with MS.

All I could think was, "I'm only 37 years old. I want to ski, hike, bike and travel with my family"

The diagnosis was more traumatic than the disease. I didn't have enough information to process what it meant. I didn't have enough information to take action. I only knew enough to be scared. I was scared that I would be able to keep up with my daughter and husband, or that I would hold them back. I was scared that I wouldn't be able to walk and terrified of the other potentially debilitating symptoms of MS.

I knew that I had to educate myself and start making decisions based on facts not fear.

It is an understatement to say that MS has changed my life. My diagnosis changed my life, my treatment choices changed my life and my declining health changed my life. It wasn't until I took control of my health-care, found a great neurologist and decided to fight MS that I realized things could change for the best.

Two years after my diagnosis, I finally got to participate in an MS ride and finished a 100km on Martha's Vineyard with my friends and family.

Once I stopped being scared about what "might" happen, and made changes to be as healthy as I could be, I knew everything would be ok. Now that my health is stable, I am doing whatever I can to raise funds for a cure. I sell fine art photography at www.therideproject.com and donate 50% of each sale to MS research. With that, there is hope, and with hope, there is health.

The signs of emotional meltdown and how to avoid it

Do you feel pushed to the limits of your emotional resilience? Do you sometimes want to scream, hurl abuse, run away, or curl up into a ball on the floor?

You may be heading for an emotional meltdown. But don't worry – there are some simple things you can do to avoid it, once you recognize the symptoms.

When we're in balance, we have the inner strength to deal with trying situations. But sometimes we snap and go out of control.

In technical terms, 'meltdown' means a severe overheating of a nuclear reactor core, resulting in melting of the core and escape of radiation. That's a useful image. Because when we're happy, our resilience is high and we can cope with difficult situations. That's because we have the strength to protect the core of our being. But when our spirits are low, the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' hit the core of our being.

Like the straw that broke the camel's back, it can be something quite insignificant that finally tips the balance. Because an emotional meltdown doesn't happen overnight, except in traumatic circumstances. Usually, there is a buildup of frustration that happens over time. Here are the first warning signs that you're heading for an emotional meltdown.

The warning signs of emotional meltdown

1. You feel moody
Your prevalent mood is a sullen, gloomy feeling.
2. Making decisions is difficult
It seems impossible to make big life changes, and even small decisions are harder and harder to make.
3. You are irritable
Low-grade anger and resentment or stress can lead to irritability. You may be prone to snapping at others over trivial provocation.
4. You can't relax
The body feels tense and, try as you may, you can't seem to relax. Going to sleep is difficult and you tend to wake up and worry in the early hours.
5. Your immune system is weak
The body is run-down and you tend to get a string of colds or other infections.
6. You suffer from exhaustion
No matter how much you rest, you feel exhausted and depleted.
7. Your eating habits have changed
You either overeat, or lose your appetite.

If you notice one of the signs, you can easily get back on track. It's like veering off the road when driving a car. If you notice it at once, all you need is a simple correction and you're back on track. Let it drift on for longer and you'll need to wrench the steering wheel around to stay on the road. If you're asleep at the wheel, your car will go right off the road and crash.

So, it's really important to read the early warning signs of an emotional meltdown. All of us can have a bad day at times, but if you notice that even just two or three of the warning signs are becoming habitual patterns – watch out!

But don't worry - if you see patterns early enough, you can change them. In the following section, I'll outline five ways of escaping an emotional meltdown.

Start Expressive Writing

Expressive Writing is a self-help therapy in which one writes about difficult or traumatic events. Research shows that Expressive Writing improves the immune system, as well as the mood. It reduces blood pressure, pain, and post-traumatic symptoms. The way to do it is to write in a private journal for about fifteen minutes a day. Pour all your frustration and pain into the pages.

Unburden yourself to a friend

Talking to a trusted friend is a good way to regain a sense of perspective. Tell your friend that you're not seeking advice. All you want it to be able to talk about your problems.

Take time out

Take the time to refresh your spirit. Go for a walk or meditate – even if just for a short while. Make sure that your time-out is spent with active recreation. If you just blob out in front of TV, you'll feel worse, instead of better. Going for a walk is especially helpful because walking allows us integrate our experience.

Exercise

A fast way to lift your mood is through sustained exercise. Get your heart rate up through fast walking or other forms of exercise. Even just 10 minutes of exercise will help you feel better.

Self-analysis

Self-analysis is a very simple technique that will help you get perspective on your problems. Make sure you are alone and undisturbed for at least 30 minutes and have your journal to hand. Now ask yourself, "What is bothering me?" Wait for an answer to appear in your mind. Then ask, "But, what is really bothering me?" Keep on repeating this question, and in the end you will get to the core of the complication. We rebound a lot quicker if we understand what is really troubling us.

All these five treatments will help you regain a measure of resilience. Think of a rubber band. A resilient band can be stretched – and then snap back into size. A brittle band will break when stretched. Resilience allows us to be stretched beyond our comfort zone – and still recover.

How to find courage and overcome fear

When something unexpected happens, fear is a natural response.

It's like being dropped into an unknown country without a map. We don't know which way to turn and this creates fear and anxiety.

Your fears may be

- of something similar happening again
- of being left alone
- of having to leave loved ones
- of breaking down or losing control
- of that you or those you love could be harmed or distressed
- that this crisis will reveal your weaknesses

When you're faced with a difficult situation, many of the fears you encounter may actually be irrational. It may be good to talk them through with a trusted friend. Remember that whatever your fears are, you will find the strength to deal with what happens in the future. Each human being has untapped resources of strength and resilience.

As you go through the seven steps of healing, your fear and anxiety will decrease, and your confidence and positive mind will be strengthened.

How to alleviate stress and find peace

When life becomes difficult, it's natural to feel stressed and strung out. Stress has both a mental and a physical side. The mental side of stress is the preoccupation with the difficulties that you experience. The physical side is the tenseness with which the body responds to fear and anxiety.

Stress equals preoccupied mind plus tense body.

A tense body is the result of a preoccupied mind. Check in with yourself for a moment. What are your predominant thoughts? If you're stressed, you'll most likely experience one or more of the following thought-patterns:

- You are anxious about the near future.
- You experience a lot of negative self-talk, such as 'I can't do this' or 'It's just too much'.
- You try to keep all your commitments in your head and feel overwhelmed.

When we are stressed, it sometimes feels like we are wound up tight, sometimes right to breaking point. It's important to learn how to unwind and relax body and mind - even if only for short periods.

The key factor of stress is preoccupation.

When we are preoccupied, we don't experience the present moment because our mind is somewhere else. When we return to the present moment, a small miracle happens - stress drops away. This is a simple and effective way to calm you mind. The more you practice returning to the present moment, the more you learn how to put your stressed mind at ease.

The only way to escape preoccupation is to tune in to the experience of 'now'. When we notice our experience of the moment right now, all thoughts of future

and past evaporate - even if it's just for a little while.

The five senses are doorways into the Now

Take a moment right now to check in with your senses.

- What do you hear right now?
- What do you see right now?
- What do you smell right now?
- What body sensations do you feel right now?

Just checking in with your senses made you feel calmer, right? Remember to stop and check in with your senses whenever you feel stressed. You will find that it's a relief to return home to the present moment.

Moments make up our life: inspiring moments, joyful moments, grieving moments, playful moments - moments of all different shades and colors. When we are pre-occupied, we miss what this moment right now has to offer. We miss your life itself.

How Danny L. finally overcame chronic stress

As the following story of Danny L. illustrates, it's sometimes difficult to spot chronic stress as the root cause of ill health.

Danny was in his late forties. Good living and a love of Chardonnay had put some extra rings around his waist and high color on his cheeks. He worked as an electrical engineer. When he got a new boss, he started having trouble at work. He missed out on a promotion and felt increasingly unhappy and alienated.

One Saturday afternoon, he was mowing the lawn when he experienced a sharp pain in his chest and collapsed. Next thing he knew, a medic was pressing an oxygen mask to his face and he was being rushed to hospital.

There, they performed a whole battery of tests upon him. But all were inconclusive. Back home again, Danny began to experience other health problems. He couldn't sleep at night and had recurring flu-like symptoms. A nagging pain in his abdomen worried him. After a year of ill health, Danny went to a naturopath to get some advice. She pointed out that Danny might be suffering from chronic stress.

A year later Danny said to me:

'My life has changed so much in the last year. I hardly recognize myself! I was beginning to feel like an invalid, but now I feel great. I look forward to each day!'

'What changes did you make?' I asked.

'I changed my job. The work I'm doing now isn't as well paid, but it's much less stressful. I spend more time with the wife. We're getting on better now.'

He bit his lower lip. 'You see, when I was stressed I wasn't performing that well in bed and she was getting frustrated.'

He took a sip of water.

‘And I’ve stopped drinking.’ He shook his head. ‘I tell you that was bloody hard! And I’m a lot fitter. I go swimming and do some jogging.’

I looked him over. He’d lost weight and his eyes were clear.

‘What turned your life around, Danny?’

‘You asked me to go to counseling. At first, I hated it because I’m not used to spitting things out. But then, I got more relaxed. Finally, it was as if a huge weight had lifted off my shoulders.’

You can see how Danny’s life improved dramatically, once he addressed the causes of stress, and made changes to his life-style.



Your life is precious. And it's yours to create.

You may not be able to change the situation you are in right now. But you can change the way you respond to the situation. You can give up, or give in, get angry or be positive. You can use whatever life has given you as an opportunity for change.

I wish with all my heart that you will find the strength to turn your challenge into opportunity.

If you enjoyed this chapter, please read my complete Ebook, [Start Over: Create the Life YOU Want](#).

Here is what you will find within:

Step 1: Weather the Storm

- How to cope with shock

- How a brave woman overcame a scary diagnosis

- The signs of emotional meltdown – and how to avoid it

- How to find courage and overcome fear

- How to alleviate stress

Step 2: Accept

- How to find acceptance

- How to heal with Expressive Writing Therapy

Step 3: Be Positive

- The miracle of sharing

- How to work skillfully with anger

- What good nutrition can do for you

- Improve your sleep with these ten simple steps

- Do you use this free mood enhancer?

Step 4: Be Present

- The blessing of being present
- Overcome emotional numbness
- How to take control of your thoughts
- The miracle of mindfulness

Step 5: Take Action

- Take charge of your life
- How exercise can enhance your wellbeing
- Four simple strategies to overcome inertia
- How to be sociable instead of withdrawing

Step 6: Integrate

- How to find fresh confidence
- Set goals which shape your new life

Step 7: Rebuild your life

- Start something new
- How to move forward

What's Next?

- The education of the heart
- How to find compassion and forgiveness
- Is it ever too late for change?
- Conclusion

Whether you're facing a transition in your life right now, or whether you want to heal from difficult situations in the past, this book will help you to create the life you want.

Be inspired by the stories of people who have had to start over in life – and have finally been able to create the life they wanted.

[Click here to find out more](#) about the full version of my eBook Start Over: How to Create the Life YOU Want. As a Goodlife ZEN reader, you can get the complete version for only \$17. [Click here to get it right away](#) for yourself, or as a present for someone whom you would like to support.

If you are keen to create the life YOU want, get the complete [Goodlife ZEN Start Over Guide](#). It includes a workbook, videos, and podcasts. Check it out [here](#).

I wish you all the best

- Mary Jaksch