

FACING CHALLENGES

A Self-Help Guide

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

During difficult times, part of being emotionally resilient is checking in with yourself. As you identify things you are struggling with, you can choose coping strategies to help you stay healthy. You can also help others. To learn more, see the discussion guide "How Can I Minister to Others During a Crisis?"

■ STEP 1: IDENTIFY AND ACCEPT

How do you respond to difficulties? The following list includes ways people commonly respond to challenges out of our control. Recognize that responding in different ways is natural and part of being human. You may struggle, and that's OK. You may also respond with resilience by using strengths and resources. Check all that apply to you.

Emotional

- ☐ Denial
- ☐ Depression, grief
- ☐ Anxiety, fear
- ☐ Anger, agitation
- ☐ Guilt

Physical

- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Headache
- ☐ Sleep disturbance
- ☐ Change in appetite
- ☐ Muscle tension
- ☐ Shallow breathing

Mental

- ☐ Impaired judgment
- ☐ Forgetfulness
- ☐ Distractibility
- ☐ Distorted sense of time, reality
- ☐ Nightmares
- ☐ Flashbacks

Social

- ☐ Loneliness, withdrawal
- ☐ Clinginess
- ☐ Marital or relationship tension
- ☐ Parent/child conflict
- ☐ Protectiveness

Spiritual

- ☐ Increased reliance on God
- ☐ Feeling abandoned by God
- ☐ Feelings of worthlessness
- ☐ Finding it hard to engage in religious practices such as meditation, prayer, church attendance, etc.
- ☐ Decreased desire to live a good life
- ☐ Loss of hope

Resilience Responses

- ☐ Alertness/increased readiness to respond
- ☐ Increased focus on the present and future
- ☐ Enhanced appreciation of loved ones
- ☐ Feelings of determination, courage, optimism, creativity, faith
- ☐ Desire to connect with and help others
- ☐ Desire to meet challenges and address difficulties
- ☐ Finding a new definition of a "good day"
- ☐ Greater focus on quality time with family and friends
- ☐ Increased commitment to self, family, friends, and faith

■ STEP 2: FOCUS OUR THOUGHTS

In our lives, we will experience strenuous events or circumstances beyond our control. However, how we respond and adapt to these stressful circumstances is within our control. Pay attention to your thoughts and consider how you can lead your thoughts in a healthy direction.

■ STEP 3: ACT

Identify coping strategies that work for you. Practice using these strategies in everyday life. Check the strategies below that you currently use or would like to try.

Emotional

- ☐ Journal your thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- ☐ Listen to inspiring music
- ☐ Talk about your feelings
- ☐ Deep breathing, meditation, positive thinking
- ☐ Allow yourself to cry
- ☐ Find things that make you laugh
- ☐ Spend time with pets

Physical

- ☐ Drink water and eat healthy food
- ☐ Get enough sleep
- ☐ Physical activity
- ☐ Take necessary medications
- ☐ Follow a regular routine
- ☐ Reward yourself
- ☐ Hug/hold and show appropriate affection with family and friends
- ☐ Get regular medical care

Mental

- ☐ Read or listen to uplifting books
- ☐ Help children with schoolwork
- ☐ Write stories or poems
- ☐ Write a priorities and values list
- ☐ Set short- and long-term goals
- ☐ Seek accurate information from trustworthy sources
- ☐ Take a break from the news

Social

- ☐ Spend time with family and friends
- ☐ Play games with others
- ☐ Connect with important people
- ☐ Invite others to dinner
- ☐ Find ways to help and serve others
- ☐ Take a break from social media
- ☐ Join community organizations

Spiritual

- ☐ Ponder and meditate
- ☐ Be open to inspiration
- ☐ Focus on what is most important to you
- ☐ Identify what is meaningful and notice its place in your life
- ☐ Pray, sing
- ☐ Read inspirational literature (talks, music, scripture, etc.)
- ☐ Counsel with trusted Church leaders

■ STEP 4: DISCUSS AND SHARE

With your family, friends, or support system, share some of your responses and coping strategies. Discuss how you can support each other. Review and practice your coping strategies whenever you feel challenged or stressed.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

How Can I Minister to Others During a Crisis?

During difficult situations, it's important for us to support and strengthen each other. As a family or with your support system, discuss ideas for helping others. Follow this discussion guide to have a conversation and learn about ways you can minister to others during difficult times.

Consider: How can you be a support to others during a crisis?

INTRODUCTION

Start with a prayer. Ask for the Spirit to inspire you and your family or support system and to guide you in ministering to and helping others.

■ Part 1: Tips for Ministering to Others in a Crisis

Read: Take turns reading and discussing each of the general guidelines for ministering to others in a crisis below:

- **It can be helpful to just be there for someone.** This can mean making a phone or video call or sending a text message so people know you are thinking of them. Your presence can be calming and comforting. Offer to talk or spend time together as much as is needed.
- **Listen actively. Focus on the person and listen with your heart.** Don't be distracted by thinking about how you'll respond to what she or he is saying.
- **Remember everyone is different and will respond to crisis differently.** Allow others to go through their own experiences.
- **Encourage and allow others to express how they feel,** but avoid forcing them to talk about feelings or subjects that aren't freely shared.
- **Ask questions about how others are feeling and what they are experiencing.** Avoid assuming you already know how they feel.
- **Pray together.** Prayer invites the Spirit and can bring peace and comfort.
- **Be cautious about sharing stories from your past.** It's important to focus on each person and his or her experience.
- **If appropriate and wanted, hug or provide other physical comfort.**
- **Find additional resources you can provide if needed,** including credible sources of information, scriptures or talks, or other ways to find support. The form "Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide" could be a helpful reference. If someone wants professional support, connect with a bishop, your local Family Services office, or other sources.
- **Continue to be present with those who are struggling, even when you are not sure what to say or do.**

Discuss: How can I better apply these general guidelines in ministering to others who are in crisis?

■ Part 2: Ideas of What to Say and Do

Read: Take turns reading a principle and the additional ideas for application below. These principles and ideas can help you minister to those struggling. (As you discuss these principles, look for opportunities to discover additional words and actions to help as well as those that might not be helpful.)

Discuss: How can I better learn and apply these principles?

PRINCIPLE	WHAT CAN I SAY OR DO?
Be Compassionate	Show others that you care about them. You might say things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "We love you."• "I'm so sorry for your loss."• "You are in my thoughts and prayers."• "I'm here for you, and I can listen." (It's OK to just sit quietly with the person. Just being there offers support.)

PRINCIPLE	WHAT CAN I SAY OR DO?
Allow Others to Express Their Feelings	<p>Ask questions to help others explain their experiences, but avoid forcing them to talk about feelings or subjects they aren't ready to discuss. You might consider questions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What worries you the most right now?" • "What coping strategies are you using?" • "What are the hardest challenges you have faced this week?" • "What strengths do you see in yourself and others?" • "What concerns do you have about the future?" • "How does your faith help?" • "Is there anything about your past that is troubling you?" • "Would you share about a time when you experienced healing in your life?"
Empathize and Normalize Responses	<p>Show others that you understand their unique experiences and help them feel it's normal to not be OK right now. You might say things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I don't fully understand the pain you are feeling, but I know that this must be hard for you." • "It's OK to feel whatever emotions you are feeling." • People may be feeling sad, angry, confused, lost, numb, guilty, helpless, or many other emotions. • "It's normal to feel like our thoughts and emotions are beyond our control." • "Everyone responds differently—it's OK to feel strong and like you're doing well, and it is OK to struggle." <p>If others are struggling with sleep, headaches, stomachaches, appetite, daily routines, and spiritual practices, help them know that it is normal to struggle. Help them be patient and graceful with themselves.</p>
Suggest Ideas for Ways to Cope	<p>If others want or need ideas for how to manage emotions and stress, discuss some of these practical ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking time to take care of ourselves, including proper nutrition, hydration, hygiene, exercise, sleep, and prescribed medications • Limiting news and social media • Engaging in service to others as we are able • Learning mindfulness or breathing exercises • Facing life one day, hour, or minute at a time <p>You might ask questions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What are your coping strategies? What has helped you cope with difficulties in the past?" • "How are you taking care of your physical health as well as your mental health?" • "How is your faith helping you? How are you relying upon the Lord?"
Offer Hope	<p>In intense crisis situations, deep expressions of faith and hope often can feel trite or not helpful. Consider hopeful statements like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm here with you and for you." • "I know people who can help." • "I'll keep checking in with you." • "I'll give you the space that you need, and I'll be available to help and be with you as well."

■ Part 3: Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide

Read: As we minister to others, we need to take care of ourselves emotionally, mentally, socially, physically, and spiritually. During difficult times, part of being emotionally resilient is checking in with yourself. As you identify things you are struggling with, you can choose coping strategies to help yourself stay healthy.

Activity: Each person in the discussion group should fill out the form “Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide” for themselves. After filling out the form, each person can share the responses they identified and the coping strategies they selected or anything else they learned about themselves from the form.

The “Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide” can also be a helpful tool for those we minister to.

■ Part 4: Who Can I Minister To?

Consider: Take some time individually to ponder who you can minister to during this time and how. Write down any thoughts that come to mind, and then discuss as group.

CONCLUSION

End by having each person take two minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful or valuable to you in this conversation?
- What did you learn?
- What common ground did you find with others?
- How has this conversation changed your perception?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based on this discussion?

Close with a prayer.

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