

# Staying Strong Through Life's Challenges



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Illness, divorce, a loved one's death, a natural disaster. We all face unexpected challenges at some point in our lives. A difficult challenge may unleash a flood of upsetting emotions, including fear, worry, sadness, grief, and anger. Sometimes these seemingly conflicting emotions can even occur at the same time, causing you to feel overwhelmed and paralyzed with inaction. The way you deal with these powerful feelings may help determine whether you end up struggling or strengthened in the long run.

If you don't have the coping skills you need, adversity and trauma can take a toll on your emotional and physical well-being now and into the future. It can result in stress-related health problems, such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, headaches, digestive ailments, and a weakened immune response. Additionally, high levels of stress can also lead to difficulty concentrating or focusing, and challenges with short term memory. Fortunately, research shows that these risks can often be offset by effective coping skills.

Below are tips and resources to help you deal with some common sources of adversity and trauma.

**A serious or chronic illness.** It's your choice how much to tell others about a health issue you may be facing. But with your most trusted family and friends, sharing what you are going through can provide valuable support. You'll find further advice in the article [When You or a Family Member Has a Chronic Illness](#).

**A divorce or separation.** Divorce can affect everything from your home and finances to your family life and friendships. This often results in feelings of loss on many levels, and in many areas of your life, so be kind to yourself. Prioritize eating healthy and getting exercise. Make plans to meet up with caring friends. Explore a hobby you've been wanting to try. Meanwhile, cut yourself some slack on less important tasks, such as nonessential housework. For more pointers, check out the resources in our [Divorce Toolkit](#).

**The death of a loved one.** Coping with such a profound loss is one of the toughest challenges many of us will ever face. You may experience a range of emotions. Accept whatever you're feeling in any given moment, even when it hurts. There is no "correct" timeline for grief, and your experience of loss will be as unique as your relationship with your loved one. If the pain becomes too much to bear, reach out to a trusted friend, religious adviser, or counsellor, or contact your EAP. For more help and support, listen to our [Coping with Loss](#) podcast.

*Sharing what you are going through with others can provide valuable support during challenging and difficult times.*

**A family or financial crisis.** Maybe you're way behind on your bills, or maybe a loved one is struggling with addiction. When you're in the middle of a crisis, it's easy to feel helpless or hopeless. Take a step back to gain some perspective. Recall a time in the past when you faced an obstacle and overcame it. Remember how strong and capable you can be. And remind yourself that you don't have to do it all alone—read [How the EAP Can Help in a Crisis](#).

**A catastrophic event such as a natural disaster.** You hope to never face this type of life-threatening event. But if you do, being prepared can make the crucial difference in your survival and emotional recovery. New this month, see our [Emergency Preparedness Toolkit](#). You'll find resources to help you and those you love be prepared in the event of an emergency.

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