



7 Tips to deal with Tough Times: Covid-19

1 May 2020

We will all have tough times. We know this. Up until the end of 2019, most of us could have named times that had been tough for us. And then this year the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, and we suddenly learnt all over again what tough times mean, by having to experience a crisis most of us have never before experienced.

Human beings like certainty. That is how we are wired. We know what to do when things are the same day in and day out. We have learned what needs to be done to get through the days successfully and happily. When everything is turned upside down, we are left floundering, because suddenly we don't know how to deal with the situation. We don't have tried and trusted methods for navigating our way through it. And so we resort to different ways of coping. We can become fearful and hide away. We can give up and do nothing. We can rest and take a break from life. We can get angry and emotional. We will probably do all of this, because it is quite normal for human beings to react like this. We can also decide who we want to be during this pandemic, and we can decide what we want to do during this time. Some things we are always in control of. We are always in control of what we think. We are always in control of how we act. We are always in control of the values we live out. When it looks like things are out of control, remind yourself that there are still some things you have control over. And take charge of those.

1. Lean into the pain. There are not that many people whose lives are better off because of the virus. For almost everyone there is loss at various levels. For human beings loss usually equals pain. When you are in pain, one of the worst things you can do is to try and fight it. That just gives your pain more energy. Lean into the pain. Accept it. Nothing will ever change or get better until you accept it. It is what it is, and nothing you can do will change it. Trying to fight an existing situation usually exacerbates your pain and anguish about the situation.
2. Allow yourself to feel what you feel. Feelings are valid. But don't act out inappropriately. Having feelings and talking about your feelings is good. Taking your feelings out inappropriately on others and yourself, which includes harming yourself or others is not at all okay. While it's good to talk about your feelings, you can also overdo it. You don't want to be story fondling your unhappiness too much,

because then you just reinforce your unhappiness and get stuck there. You make your misery bigger than it needs to be. Get the feelings out and move on.

3. Let go of the way you thought things ought to be. In nature, when you struggle you suffer. If you fall out of a boat into a rapid in the river and you struggle you may not come out alive. If you allow yourself to go with the rapid it will pull you down and push you out again. Struggling makes everything worse. When you stop struggling you float. So stop struggling, allow yourself to float, and allow the answers to come. If you want to find solutions to your problems you need to be in a mental state that is calm. Creative problem solving cannot happen when you are distraught.
4. Allow things to unfold. Human beings are extremely impatient. We live in a world where we want everything yesterday. Life usually has to teach us, and often the hard way, to be patient. Parts of your life probably are on hold. Events that you planned and goals you set are probably on hold. You can either be angry and bitter and resentful about this, or you can enter the flow of life and recognise that you can still do what you wanted to do, just not now. There will be a time and place for realising your goals and dreams later or for setting new goals and dreams. Your life is not going to be over or destroyed or ruined because you can only achieve a goal next year, or the year after that. And consider, that perhaps, a new goal may be what is needed now. This pandemic makes us look at things differently and re-evaluate what really matters.
5. Stop ruminating on the “what ifs”. What if I had saved up more money? What if I had not expanded my business in January and taken a new loan for it? What if I had stayed in my old secure job? What if we had not taken that overseas holiday and rather saved the money? When times are tough it is easy to berate ourselves for what we believe were not good decisions in the past. You can drive yourself crazy with “what ifs”, and none of it will help one bit. If you are not someone who saves, then perhaps deciding to have some emergency savings going forward would be a good thing to do. However, we cannot predict the future. And you cannot put living on hold expecting the worst to always happen. That is like driving through life with the hand brake on. You did what you thought was best at the time. Decide if there are some things you want to do differently going forward, and then let the rest go. It is what it is, and you can only move forward when you accept your current situation exactly as it is, not as you hope it would be or want it to be.
6. Learn to master the present. Master what is in front of you. That is how you grow through life. This is the situation you are in right now. How do you make the most of it? What can you learn from the present? Can you get this situation to work for your highest good? It might all look very bleak, however there are usually always opportunities to be found if you really look for them. Often there is not much you can do about the situation you are in and what is happening to you. Always, you can decide how to respond to what is happening to you. And always you get to decide who you want to be in the situation. That no one can take from you
7. Decide what you want to do. There are no hard and fast rules of how to deal with being at home. You can learn new skills if you want to, but you don't have to. If you feel like resting and having a holiday, then do that. Maybe that is what you need. If you want to learn a new skill then do that. If you still have a ton of work to do, then get on with it. If you are thinking this is time to start a side business then do that. Perhaps you want to start a hobby and have never had time to do that. Maybe this is a time to reflect on yourself and engage in some personal growth and development.

None of us is coming out of this the same as we went in. If you are an essential worker you have experienced a change in work routines. You have had to sanitise your hands constantly, you are forever having your temperature taken, and you are probably very tired from little rest and lots of worry. You wonder if the next customer or public citizen or patient coming along has the virus and will give it to you. If you have a business, you might be stressing as to how to stay in business. If you are employed, you may be wondering if you will

have a job when you go back to the office, and for how long. This virus has also shown us what is wrong in our world, including the huge inequalities that exist. We are all impacted. But, we also all have choices. We are human beings and we can think for ourselves. And each one of us gets to make choices. We can either use this pandemic and our experiences of it to make us better or bitter, stronger or weaker, wiser or more foolish. You get to decide.