

Becoming Stronger at the Broken Places

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.” Ernest Hemingway

1. Take an honest look at your life *before* a crisis strikes. Find help to identify your obvious risks and weaknesses and work to correct or minimize them. Find ways to provide yourself with emotional and spiritual strength for the future.
2. Talk or write about your powerful emotions, feelings and reactions to the event. Share your feelings and reactions with someone who is a good non-judgmental listener. Think of getting through just one small increment of time, minute by minute.
3. Set realistic goals – Work on just 1 or 2 activities at a time. Break them down into smaller steps and celebrate your progress. The speed of progress is not as important as the direction. Keep a record of your progress each day on a calendar to help you realize your goals. Example: Great day Maintained progress Will try again tomorrow.
4. Get appropriate and responsible help when it is needed by trained trauma specialists, mental health treatment specialists, pastoral care counselors or others who understand traumatic reactions or mental health challenges. If you have a treatment team, keep all of your appointments and talk honestly with all members of your treatment team. Ask questions. Your understanding can help you get through difficult periods of time.
5. Identify community resources that can help you attain your immediate and longer-term goals and reduce your isolation from friends, family and helpers. Surround yourself with positive, content and well-adjusted people. Avoid chaotic situations and learn simplicity. Avoid stagnation. Attending some events and just showing up often brings unanticipated pleasures and connections.
6. Ask yourself *“What can I learn from this experience that will be helpful to me and strengthen me in the future?”* Some of life’s positive lessons are learned during hard times. Remember that some questions about what happens in life simply do not have answers. Cultivate optimism. Having a hopeful mindset lets you see and seize opportunities that are present following any crisis. Find ways to provide yourself with emotional and spiritual strength for the future.
7. Taking care of your health can contribute to a sense of well-being and is an important part of your healing. Stay physically fit by eating nutritious foods, getting exercise regularly and resting, do what it takes to take care of your whole physical, emotional and spiritual self in a healthy way.
8. Develop and reward a sense of humor by exposing yourself to humorous situations. Learn to laugh, enjoy life, have healthy personal relationships and breathe deeply. Listen to good music, read a good book, put some music on and dance. Involve yourself in charitable, social and/or educational activities, or other positive affiliations.
9. When emotionally ready, find purpose or meaning in the loss. Consider *“how does this fit into my life?”* Take action as an advocate by helping to influence decisions relating to the event, experience, or injury. Help individuals who have suffered similar crises or traumatic life events. Your passion and initiative will inspire others. Reinvest your life and create a new, healthy and positive *“normal”*.