



Becoming the Master of Disaster: How to Take Charge in Chaotic Times

Tips & Resources



Dear M

I totally get how stressful life can be when problems feel like they're piling up. It's so easy to get overwhelmed and not know where to start. But the good news is that facing issues head-on and coming up with solutions can really help reduce that stressed-out feeling.

Here's the thing - when we avoid dealing with obstacles, they just fester in the back of our minds, right? We wind up anxious, preoccupied, and feeling trapped. But when we gather up the courage to tackle a problem hands-on, it lets us take back some control. Even figuring out the first practical step forward can immediately lift some mental weight off our shoulders.

And I find it empowering to tell a problem - "Alright, I see you, and I'm gonna deal with you."

Instead of letting it loom over you, you are taking charge. Then you can channel that nervous energy into constructive planning and action instead of dwelling on the worst-case scenarios your mind wants to conjure up.

Even if you can't entirely resolve something right away, chipping away bit by bit is so much better than ignoring it. And there's nothing more relieving than finally facing the beast and slaying it! Things feel lighter and more possible. So, next time you're stressed, see if there's a practical way you can start addressing the root issue. Taking control back from problems is truly liberating! You've got this.

Love, Hope



Action Conquers Fear
Unknown

Problem-Focused Coping: *Definition*

Problem focused coping means actively addressing or solving the source of your stress in a strategic way rather than only reducing negative emotions surrounding the issue.

It involves analysing the stressor, taking action to change the situation, seeking new information, and generating possible solutions. It is considered an adaptive coping strategy focused directly on the root cause of distress. **Examples include:**

- ✓ Making a to-do list to break down tasks when feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities.
- ✓ Enrolling in anger management classes after getting in an argument.
- ✓ Researching and applying for new jobs if you have been laid off from work.
- ✓ Calling a repairperson to fix a household appliance that is broken.
- ✓ Talking to those in conflict with you to resolve a disagreement.



The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Pros of Problem-Focused Coping

Tackling problems head-on has some majorly awesome upsides:



For starters, it can straight-up remove or get rid of the very source of your stress. No more lying awake at night worrying over that mountain of work because you put systems in place to plough through it efficiently.



It also just makes you feel like a total badass boss when you handle stuff directly instead of avoiding it. You're not sitting around feeling angsty and powerless - you take control and fix what's bugging you. Being the master of your destiny is an incredibly empowering feeling!



And you know what else is cool? When you get good at looking at obstacles as just challenges to conquer, it can motivate you to get out of crappy situations that are no good for your wellbeing. Toxic job, unhealthy relationship, you name it - you realise you deserve better and upgrade your life.



Plus, for some people, **naming and taming the problem itself is way easier than dealing with all the messy feelings** that come with stress. If getting touchy-feely with your emotions isn't really your jam, problem-focused coping provides an awesome alternative approach.



Finally, directly attacking what's stressing you out tends to work better and faster than dancing around the periphery. You get satisfying, tangible results sooner by calling out the root issue and handling it. No more putting out fire after fire - you're extinguishing the whole darn blaze!

Problem-Focused Coping Strategies

When life decides to throw some serious stressors your way, you gotta be like a ninja and hit that nonsense with problem-busting tactics. Here are some ways you can dismantle those anxiety grenades:



Life comes with many challenges. The ones that should not scare us are the ones we can take on and take control of.

Angelina Jolie



Define the Problem Clearly

Transfer it from your head to paper or a digital note. Objectively spell out every little issue, obstacle, demand - whatever is weighing you down. Seeing it all clearly defined takes away some of the mind-spinning overwhelm - making it easier to tackle.



Make a Step-By-Step Action Plan

Now write up your game plan detailing exactly what you will do and when. Having purposeful actions to tick off provides so much soothing direction when you're drowning in chaos. Track progress so you feel motivated as you work through each doable step.



Prevent Recurrence in the Future

After tackling a problem, review what allowed that issue to become so stress-inducing in the first place. Avoid getting smacked around by the same nonsense again down the road. Developing solutions for the root cause provides sustainable stress relief.

The more you strategically frame stressors as solvable challenges to break down and conquer, the less intense their negative emotional impact.



Break Problems into Smaller Parts

Trying to solve one huge problem can feel hopeless. Separate that ginormous problem into smaller, specific, and more manageable chunks. Prioritise the urgency levels too so you're clearing the crucial path first.



Focus Only on What's Within Your Control

Make sure you're spending your limited energy just on the stuff you can control. If outside forces block certain solutions, focus on managing your response. Let go of wasting energy on what you can't change.



Research Options or Ask for Input

Don't be a lone struggle warrior - ask people who have been there for their pro-tips and solutions. The more ideas and angles you gather, the more doors you can peek through to find your exit strategy. Experts can really unlock some new insight.



Celebrate Problem Resolution Milestones

Once you've KO'd a problem, take a victory lap! Take a moment to recognise your progress and wins. This makes the effort feel rewarding and worth it.

Just as we develop our physical muscles through overcoming opposition - such as lifting weights - we develop our character muscles by overcoming challenges and adversity.

Stephen Covey



Cons of Problem-Focused

Coping Strategies

But trying to directly tackle every single issue can have some downsides too:

- ✗ **Exhaustion.** Attempting to analyse, strategise, and solve constant problems takes a ton of effort and can just wear you out, leading to fatigue or burnout. Sometimes you need to pause and restore your energy.
- ✗ **Uncontrollable problems.** Unfortunately, there are just certain stressful situations we have little power over no matter what we try, like illnesses, job losses, or a loved one's choices. Constantly fighting the unfixable only leads to more frustration.
- ✗ **Overlooking emotions.** While focusing on solutions, it's still vital to process the difficult feelings and pain that stressors also cause. If emotions are ignored too much, they may build up or come out later uncontrollably or via unhealthy means like angry outbursts. Making space for feelings helps maintain balance and mental health.
- ✗ **Unrealistic expectations.** Habitually relying on problem-solving sets up high internal pressure to be able to resolve anything life throws your way. This black and white thinking leaves little room for accepting life's uncertainties.

In the end, solving issues does wonders for taking control back from stress. But problem-focused coping works far better balanced with emotional processing and accepting limitations. Be kind to yourself and realise you don't have to actively fight every battle life sends.

In the long Term

Pressure is pretty much unavoidable in our fast-paced world. A bit here and there is manageable, but when challenging circumstances start piling up, that level of compounded stress can really impact multiple areas of your life in an unhealthy way.

If that overwhelming, pervasive stress becomes your norm, it may be worth considering getting some professional help. There are lots of options to explore - you can search online directories to find a local therapist or look into virtual treatment programs if you prefer telehealth services from home. Mindfulness-based approaches like meditation have proven very effective for many people in reducing stress levels. Hypnotherapy is another avenue some find helpful as well.

The key is finding the right stress-busting method and provider that resonates most with your personal needs and lifestyle. Don't be afraid to discuss different therapeutic modalities to decide what program would be the ideal fit. A little professional guidance can go a long way in getting that debilitating stress under control.



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📅 **THURSDAY, 18TH APRIL 2024.**

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WHERE TO GET HELP?

If you would like to connect or need someone to talk to, please contact one of the resources below.

DNA wellness – 0800 333 238 / please call me 071 681 1247

Your Human Resource Department

Your line manager

South African Anxiety and Depression Group: 0800 456 789 (24 hour helpline) or 011 234 4837

Suicidal Emergency contact us on 0800 567 567

Lifeline National counselling line 0861 322 322

Stop gender violence 0800 150 150

MACSTEEL®

Pursuing Reinvention

Please send your emails to hope@workforcehealthcare.co.za and a counsellor will respond directly to you.