# How to Handle Setbacks During Your Healing Journey

Emotional healing is a lifelong journey that is made up of many ups and downs. It’s normal in recovery to take a few steps forward and then a few steps back. In most cases, when people are on their healing journeys, they are more likely to experience [nonlinear changes](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3163164/). The most important thing to remember with setbacks is that they are a normal part of the healing journey. People are not doing anything wrong when they experience a setback. Setbacks also allow us to learn what isn’t working so that we can find what works best for us.

**Why Setbacks Happen**

Setbacks in healing can mean different things to different people. Everyone struggles with different aspects of healing, so their setbacks might look different. Some common forms of setbacks are being overwhelmed with emotion, partaking in old behavioral patterns, and symptoms of mental health conditions returning. Setbacks can happen for a variety of reasons, such as triggers, stress, and unexpected difficult life circumstances. People can try to figure out what caused their setback as a way to learn from it and prevent it from happening next time. However, it’s important not to stay stuck in the setback and allow it to become a larger pause in healing.

**How to Move Forward**

The first step in moving forward from a setback is reframing the way that a person is viewing their struggle. Reframing to see a setback as a learning tool to use in the future can be a helpful way to remember this truth. Some even say that setbacks can be a sign of [progress](https://socialanxietyinstitute.org/blog/setbacks-are-sign-progress), in that the way people move past them forces them to practice the skills they’ve learning in their journey.

When moving forward from a setback, a person might need extra support. People should contact their support people or a therapist if they need support during this time. The first step to moving forward is identifying what is happening in the person’s life. This can help them identify if a trigger or emotion brought this setback. Next, a person can work on [reframing](https://www.library.hbs.edu/working-knowledge/failing-well-2-how-do-you-thrive-as-a-fallible-human-being) their setback to remind themselves that this is part of the process of healing. The last step is committing to small changes that can lead to the person returning to their healing journey.

When a person embarks on a healing journey, it’s important to remember that setbacks are normal. A perfect healing journey, unfortunately, does not exist. Setbacks are expected and can be a valuable tool in learning new things to assist further healing. It can be tempting for people to give up when they experience setbacks, but this is an unhelpful way to respond. Using the knowledge gained from setbacks can help people achieve higher levels of healing and increase the likelihood of long, sustainable recovery.

If you are ready to work with a therapist or teletherapist, [contact us](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php). We are here and happy to help you on your journey to healing.

**References**

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3163164/>

<https://socialanxietyinstitute.org/blog/setbacks-are-sign-progress>

<https://www.nami.org/your-journey/family-members-and-caregivers/taking-care-of-yourself/>

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<https://www.child-focus.org/news/navigating-setbacks-and-relapses/>

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