



DISCUSSION GUIDE

**HOW CAN I MINISTER TO OTHERS
DURING A CRISIS?**

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HOW CAN I MINISTER TO OTHERS DURING A CRISIS?



During difficult situations, it's important for us to support and strengthen each other. As a family or with your support system, discuss ideas for helping others. Follow this discussion guide to have a conversation and learn about ways you can minister to others during difficult times.

Consider: How can you be a support to others during a crisis?

INTRODUCTION

Start with a prayer. Ask for the Spirit to inspire you and your family or support system and to guide you in ministering to and helping others.

1 TIPS FOR MINISTERING TO OTHERS IN A CRISIS

Read: Take turns reading and discussing each of the general guidelines for ministering to others in a crisis below:

- It can be helpful to just be there for someone. This can mean a making a phone or video call or sending a text message, so people know you are thinking of them. Your presence can be calming and comforting. Offer to talk or spend time together as much as is needed.
- Listen actively. Focus on the person and listen with your heart. Don't be distracted by thinking about how you'll respond to what she or he is saying.
- Remember everyone is different and will respond to crisis differently. Allow others to go through their own experiences.
- Encourage and allow others to express how they feel, but avoid forcing them to talk about feelings or subjects that aren't freely shared.

- Ask questions about how others are feeling and what they are experiencing. Avoid assuming you already know how they feel.
- Pray together. Prayer invites the Spirit and can bring peace and comfort.
- Be cautious about sharing stories from your past. It's important to focus on each person and his or her experience.
- If appropriate and wanted, hug or provide other physical comfort.
- Find additional resources you can provide if needed, including credible sources of information, scriptures or talks, or other ways to find support. The form "Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide" could be a helpful reference. If someone wants professional support, connect with a bishop, your local Family Services office, or other sources.
- Continue to be present with those who are struggling, even when you are not sure what to say or do.

Discuss: How can I better apply these general guidelines in ministering to others who are in crisis?



2 IDEAS OF WHAT TO SAY AND DO

Read: Take turns reading a principle and the additional ideas for application below. These principles and ideas can help you minister to those struggling. (As you discuss these principles, look for opportunities to discover additional words and actions to help as well as those that might not be helpful.)

Discuss: How can I better learn and apply these principles?

BE COMPASSIONATE

Show others that you care about them. You might say things like:

- “We love you.”
- “I’m so sorry for your loss.”
- “You are in my thoughts and prayers.”
- “I’m here for you, and I can listen.” (It’s OK to just sit quietly with the person. Just being there offers support.)

ALLOW OTHERS TO EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS

Ask questions to help others explain their experiences, but avoid forcing them to talk about feelings or subjects they aren’t ready to discuss. You might consider questions like:

- “What worries you the most right now?”
- “What coping strategies are you using?”
- “What are the hardest challenges you have faced this week?”
- “What strengths do you see in yourself and others?”
- “What concerns do you have about the future?”
- “How does your faith help?”
- “Is there anything about your past that is troubling you?”
- “Would you share about a time when you experienced healing in your life?”



EMPATHIZE AND NORMALIZE RESPONSES

Show others that you understand their unique experiences and help them feel it's normal to not be OK right now. You might say things like:

- "I don't fully understand the pain you are feeling, but I know that this must be hard for you."
- "It's OK to feel whatever emotions you are feeling."
- People may be feeling sad, angry, confused, lost, numb, guilty, helpless, or many other emotions.
- "It's normal to feel like our thoughts and emotions are beyond our control."
- "Everyone responds differently—it's OK to feel strong and like you're doing well, and it is OK to struggle."

If others are struggling with sleep, headaches, stomachaches, appetite, daily routines, and spiritual practices, help them know that it is normal to struggle. Help them be patient and graceful with themselves.

SUGGEST IDEAS FOR WAYS TO COPE

If others want or need ideas for how to manage emotions and stress, discuss some of these practical ideas:

- Taking time to take care of ourselves, including proper nutrition, hydration, hygiene, exercise, sleep, and prescribed medications
- Limiting news and social media
- Engaging in service to others as we are able
- Learning mindfulness or breathing exercises
- Facing life one day, hour, or minute at a time

You might ask questions like:

- "What are your coping strategies? What has helped you cope with difficulties in the past?"
- "How are you taking care of your physical health as well as your mental health?"
- "How is your faith helping you? How are you relying upon the Lord?"

OFFER HOPE

In intense crisis situations, deep expressions of faith and hope often can feel trite or not helpful. Consider hopeful statements like:

- "I'm here with you and for you."
- "I know people who can help."
- "I'll keep checking in with you."
- "I'll give you the space that you need, and I'll be available to help and be with you as well."



3 WHO CAN I MINISTER TO?

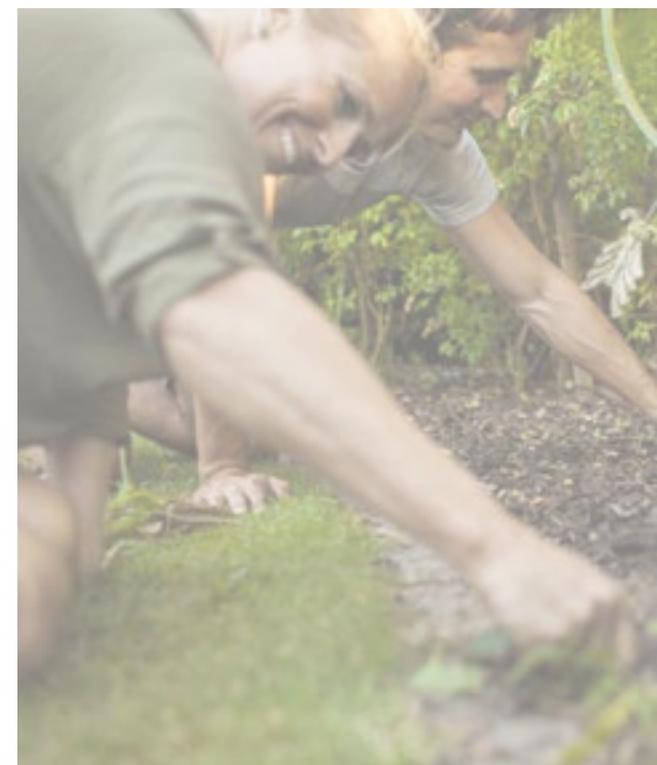
Consider: Take some time individually to ponder who you can minister to during this time and how. Write down any thoughts that come to mind, and then discuss as group.

CONCLUSION

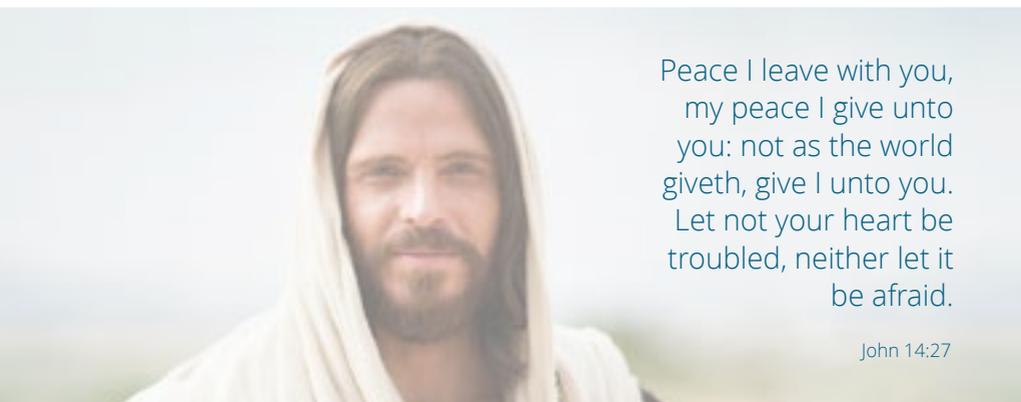
End by having each person take two minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful or valuable to you in this conversation?
- What did you learn?
- What common ground did you find with others?
- How has this conversation changed your perception?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based on this discussion?

Close with a prayer.



FACING CHALLENGES: A SELF-HELP GUIDE



During difficult times, part of being emotionally resilient is checking in with yourself. As you identify things you are struggling with, you can choose coping strategies to help you stay healthy.

Activity: Each person in the discussion group should fill out the form “Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide” for themselves. After filling out the form, each person can share the responses they identified and the coping strategies they selected or anything else they learned about themselves from the form.

The “Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide” can also be a helpful tool for those we minister to.

STEP 1 IDENTIFY AND ACCEPT

How do you respond to difficulties? The following list includes ways people commonly respond to challenges out of our control. Recognize that responding in different ways is natural and part of being human. You may struggle, and that’s OK. You may also respond with resilience by using strengths and resources. Check all that apply to you.

SPIRITUAL

- Feeling abandoned by God
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Finding it hard to engage in religious practices such as meditation, prayer, church attendance, etc.
- Decreased desire to live a good life
- Loss of hope

MENTAL

- Impaired judgment
- Forgetfulness
- Distractibility
- Distorted sense of time, reality
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks

RESILIENCE RESPONSES

- Increased reliance on God
- Alertness/increased readiness to respond
- Increased focus on the present and future
- Enhanced appreciation of loved ones
- Feelings of determination, courage, optimism, creativity, faith
- Desire to connect with and help others
- Desire to meet challenges and address difficulties
- Finding a new definition of a “good day”
- Greater focus on quality time with family and friends
- Increased commitment to self, family, friends, and faith

EMOTIONAL

- Denial
- Depression, grief
- Anxiety, fear
- Anger, agitation
- Guilt

SOCIAL

- Loneliness, withdrawal
- Clinginess
- Marital or relationship tension
- Parent/child conflict
- Protectiveness

PHYSICAL

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Sleep disturbance
- Change in appetite
- Muscle tension
- Shallow breathing

STEP 2 FOCUS OUR THOUGHTS

In our lives, we will experience strenuous events or circumstances beyond our control. However, how we respond and adapt to these stressful circumstances is within our control. Pay attention to your thoughts and consider how you can lead your thoughts in a healthy direction.

STEP 3 ACT

Identify coping strategies that work for you. Practice using these strategies in everyday life. Check the strategies below that you currently use or would like to try.

MENTAL

- Read or listen to uplifting books
- Help children with schoolwork
- Write stories or poems
- Write a priorities and values list
- Set short- and long-term goals
- Seek accurate information from trustworthy sources
- Take a break from the news

SOCIAL

- Spend time with family and friends
- Play games with others
- Connect with important people

EMOTIONAL

- Journal your thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- Listen to inspiring music
- Talk about your feelings
- Deep breathing, meditation, positive thinking
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Spend time with pets

- Invite others to dinner
Find ways to help and serve others
- Take a break from social media
- Join community organizations



SPIRITUAL

- Ponder and meditate
- Be open to inspiration
- Focus on what is most important to you
- Identify what is meaningful and notice its place in your life
- Pray, sing
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, scripture, etc.)
- Counsel with trusted Church leaders

PHYSICAL

- Drink water and eat healthy food
- Get enough sleep
- Physical activity
- Take necessary medications
- Follow a regular routine
- Reward yourself
- Hug/hold and show appropriate affection with family and friends
- Get regular medical care

HELPING CHILDREN FACE CHALLENGES: A SELF-HELP GUIDE



We express our compassion for the difficulties of caring for young children through challenging times. Thank you for your parenting work and efforts! The following steps and resources can help.

DEVELOPMENTAL FACTORS AND COMMON REACTIONS BY AGE

0 TO 5

Infancy to 2 Years:

- Can experience trauma and react to sights, sounds, and smells
- May become agitated, rock, thrash, cry or knock their heads
- Primarily they react to the emotions of others

Age 2 - 5:

- Typically feel helpless and powerless
- Are present-focused and more verbal about concerns
- May believe they caused, or they can solve the problems
- Can be self-focused with all or nothing thinking

Children five and under may react in a number of ways:

- Expressions of fear
- Clinging to parent or caregiver
- Cry, scream, whimper, or tremble
- Confusion and asking questions repeatedly
- Move aimlessly or become immobile
- Return to behaviors common to being younger (thumb sucking, bedwetting, being afraid, etc.)

Young children's reactions are strongly influenced by caregiver responses to challenges

6 TO 11

Age 6-9:

- Beginning to see the world outside of themselves
- May become preoccupied with details
- Can experience fantasy wishing and thinking
- May ask a lot of "how" and "why" questions

Age 9-11 Years:

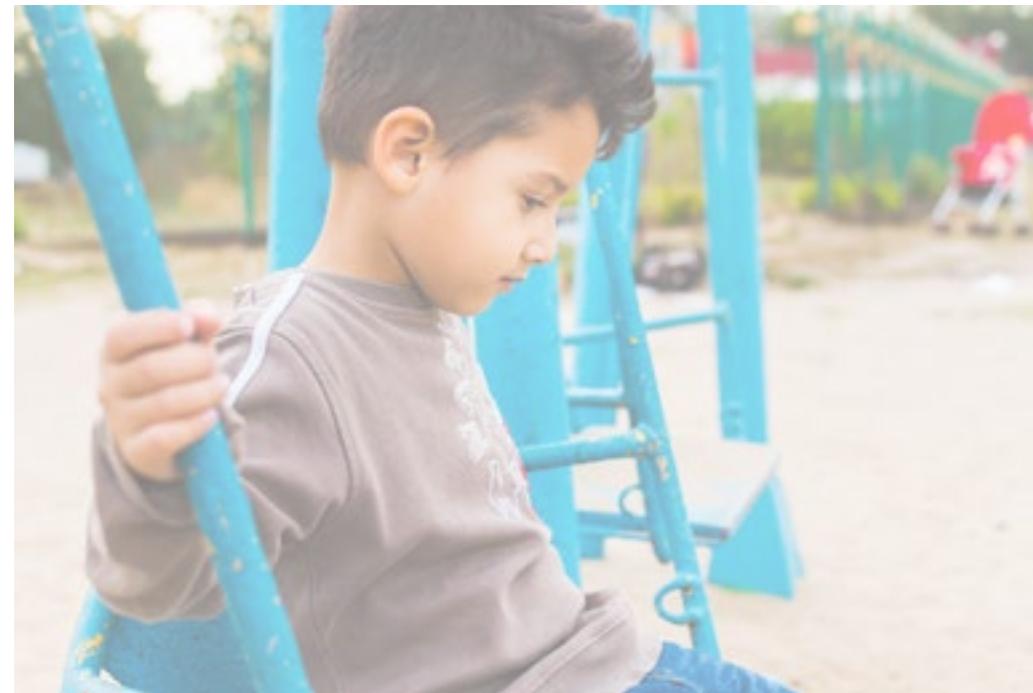
- Often think of life challenges as a punishment for bad behavior
- Making transition to a more adult understanding
- More aware of the impact on self and others
- More interested in the physical aspects of what is happening

- May fantasize about being a rescuer

Children between 6 and 11 may:

- Isolate themselves
- Become quiet around friends, family, and teachers
- Have nightmares or other sleep problems
- Become irritable or disruptive
- Have outbursts of anger or start fights

- Refuse to talk about it
- Have difficulty concentrating
- Refuse to go to school or other places
- Complain of physical problems
- Feel numb, develop fears, or become depressed
- Have overwhelming concerns with their body
- Do poorly with school or other work
- Have thoughts or worries about death and dying



STEP 2 **HELP CHILDREN LEARN TO MANAGE AND SOLVE PROBLEMS**

Identify strategies to help:

- Accept distressing feelings and provide comfort
- Use art and stories to aid expression of feelings
- When safe, give children time and space to calm their emotions
- Allow appropriate physical outlets
- When possible, provide comforting items such as stuffed animals, blankets, pillows, toys, games, and so on
- Provide reassurance, nurture hope, and realistic optimism
- Demonstrate and teach healthy coping strategies (see Facing Challenges: A Self- Help Guide for ideas)

- Re-establish and maintain routines as possible such as meals, bedtimes, chores, play, and religious practices
- Discuss plans for special events like birthdays, holidays, child and family celebrations, travel and so forth
- Be honest about your own feelings, provide brief, accurate information—avoid alarming children unnecessarily

Avoid additional stressors:

- Frequent moves or major changes
- Excessive news reports and unhelpful social media
- Too much pressure associated with education
- Arguing within the family
- Don't force or avoid conversations



STEP 3 **NURTURE SECURE AND SAFE RELATIONSHIPS**

- Remind children that they are loved, supported, and protected
- When safe, help them connect with others including family and friends
- Increase appropriate physical contact and reassuring attention
- Be responsive to the child's needs and questions
- Set limits and be consistent while gently guiding the child toward healthy behaviors
- As much as possible, meet the child's need for water, food, shelter, clothing, sleep, health, and safety
- Strive to stay connected with your child even when you are struggling
- Find creative ways to help your child serve and express care for others

Where possible, caregivers can rejuvenate by taking breaks, time away from children, and talking with other adults. When more help is needed, talk with a trusted Church leader for additional information, support, and resources.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HELPING CHILDREN

- Coping with Disaster
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Kids Health: Helping Your Child Deal with Death
- CDC Child Development
- Help Kids Cope App: Apple, Google
- Strengthening the Family Session 4



UNDERSTANDING AND HELPING CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE LOSS AND TRAUMA

WHAT ARE TYPICAL REACTIONS?

Reactions of children may be immediate or occur much later. Their responses vary greatly depending on many factors including their current developmental age. They are also strongly influenced by the reactions of those in their support system.

Some common reactions for children of all ages include:

- Loss of trust
- Fear of the event reoccurring
- Sadness and anxiety
- Outbursts and tantrums
- Aggressive behavior
- Return to behavior previously outgrown
- Physical complaints (stomachaches and headaches)
- Desire to stay home
- Avoid thoughts, feelings, places



HOW DOES LOSS AND TRAUMA AFFECT CHILDREN AT DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES?

WHAT CHILDREN THINK ABOUT MAJOR LOSS

Infancy to 2 Years:

- No concept of major loss or death
- React to the emotions of others

may believe they caused the loss or death. They may think they can bring the losses back or a person back to life.)

Age 2 - 6:

- Concern about losing someone else
- Use magical thinking (children

- Self-absorbed
- Black & white, all or nothing thinking
- Believe loss and death are not final

Age 6 - 9:

- Magical thinking still present
- May believe that loss and death is a personified "taker"
- Have begun to understand the finality of loss and death
- Afraid that loss or death is contagious

- punishment for bad behavior
- Make a transition to a more adult understanding of loss and death
- Aware of the impact loss or death may have on them, even regarding finance and security
- More interested in the physical or biological aspects of what happened

Age 9 - 11 Years:

- Often think loss or death as a

Adolescents

- Understand loss and death as an adult, since cognitive skills are further developed. Teenagers generally realize loss and death happen to everyone and they are final.

COMMON RESPONSES

Children under six can react in many ways:

- Facial expressions of fear
- Clinging to parent or caregiver
- Crying or screaming
- Whimpering or trembling
- Moving aimlessly
- Becoming immobile

- Returning to behaviors common at a younger age, e.g. thumb sucking, bedwetting, being afraid of the dark, etc.

Young children's reactions are strongly influenced by parents' reactions to the event.

Children between six and 11 have a range of reactions. They may:

- Isolate themselves
- Become quiet around friends, family, and teachers
- Have nightmares or other sleep problems
- Become irritable or disruptive
- Have outbursts of anger
- Start fights
- Be unable to concentrate
- Refuse to go to school
- Complain of unfounded physical problems
- Develop unfounded fears
- Become depressed
- Become filled with guilt
- Feel numb emotionally
- Do poorly with school and homework

Children between 12 and 17 have various reactions:

- Flashbacks to the traumatic event (flashbacks are the mind reliving the event)
- Avoiding reminders of the event
- Drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and abuse
- Antisocial behavior, i.e. disruptive, disrespectful, or destructive behavior
- Physical complaints
- Nightmares or other sleep problems

- Isolation or confusion
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts

Adolescents may feel guilty about the event. They may feel guilt for not preventing the loss or death. They may also have thoughts of revenge.

Remember, every child is different and will experience grief and loss uniquely.



HOW CAN CAREGIVERS HELP?

Attend to children

- Listen to them
- Accept/do not argue about their feelings
- Help them cope with the reality of their experiences
- Be honest about your own feelings
- Re-establish and maintain routines (e.g., meal & bedtimes, study, play, religious practices, etc.)

Reduce effects of other stressors, such as:

- Frequent moving or changes in place of residence
- Long periods away from family and friends
- Pressures at school
- Transportation problems
- Fighting within the family
- Being hungry

Monitor healing

- It takes time
- Do not ignore severe reactions
- Attend to sudden changes in behaviors, language use, or in emotional/feeling states
- Seek medical/professional help as needed

Remind children that adults:

- Love them
- Support them
- Will be with them when possible



RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON HELPING CHILDREN:

Coping with Disaster:

<https://www.ready.gov/coping-with-disaster>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network:

<http://www.nctsn.org>

National Institute of Mental Health:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Kids Health:

<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/death.html>

HELPING YOUTH FACE CHALLENGES: A SELF-HELP GUIDE



Adolescence is a time of development and discovery. Navigating the transition from childhood to young adulthood can be difficult, especially during challenging times. The following information and steps can help.

Youth: As you work on the following steps you will strengthen your ability to face challenges

STEP 1 IDENTIFY AND ACCEPT YOUR HUMAN RESPONSES

How do you respond to difficulties? Your responses are going to be unique and differ from others in timing, severity, and expression. You may struggle through challenges, and that's okay. You may also respond with resilience. The responses listed below are common human reactions to life challenges. Check all that apply to you.

EMOTIONAL

- Denial, shock, stunned
- Depression, grief
- Anxiety, fear
- Anger, agitation
- Guilt
- Feeling unsafe

PHYSICAL

- Fatigue
- Body discomfort or, stomach or headaches
- Sleep disturbance
- Change in appetite
- Muscle tension
- Shallow breathing
- Alertness/increased readiness to respond
- Increased focus on the present and future
- Enhanced appreciation of loved ones
- Risk-taking

MENTAL

- Impaired judgment
- Forgetfulness
- Distractibility
- Distorted sense of time or reality
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Difficulty with education

SOCIAL

- Loneliness, withdrawal
- Clinginess
- Relationship tension with family and/or friends
- Feelings of determination, courage, optimism, creativity, faith
- Desire to connect with and help others
- Desire to meet challenges and address difficulties
- Difficulty talking about emotions with others

SPIRITUAL

- Feeling abandoned by God
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Finding it hard to engage in religious practices such as meditation, prayer, study, church attendance
- Decreased desire to live a good life
- Loss of hope

RESILIENCE RESPONSES

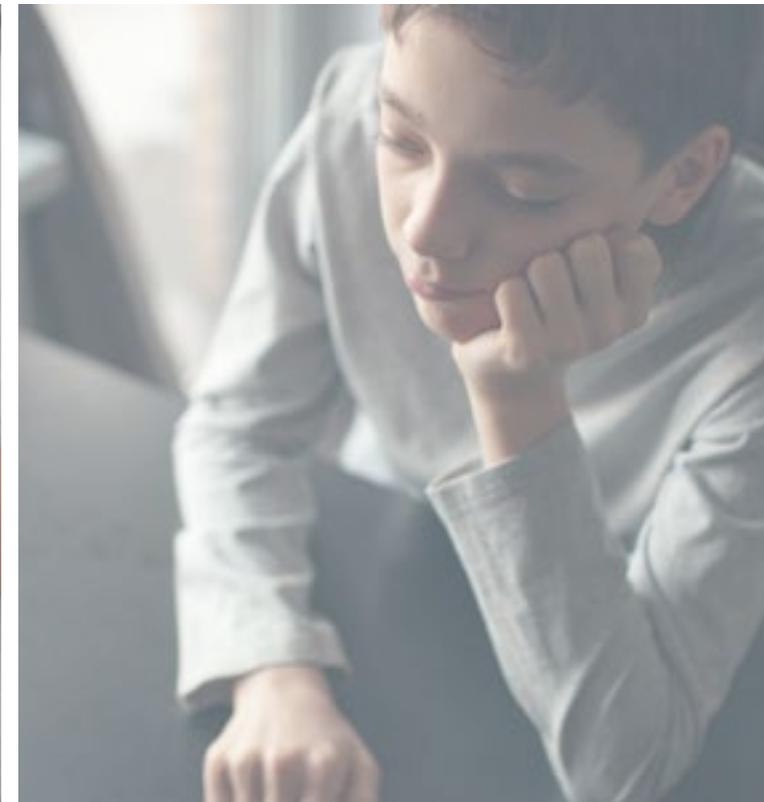
- Increased reliance on God
- Finding a new definition of a "good day"
- Greater focus on quality time with family and friends
- Increased commitment to self, family, friends, and faith



STEP 2 **CHOOSE TO FOCUS ON HELPFUL AND ACCURATE THOUGHTS**

When we experience painful circumstances, including those outside of our control, many of our thoughts can be unhelpful and/or inaccurate. We can learn to evaluate thoughts and choose to give attention to thoughts that are helpful and accurate. For example, “My friends don’t care about the way I feel.” If you further considered that thought, you would likely conclude that it is either inaccurate, unhelpful, or both.

You can let that thought go and choose to focus on more accurate and helpful thoughts like, “My trustworthy friends do care about my feelings. I wonder if they’re feeling overwhelmed like me?” Thinking about your thoughts and choosing which thoughts you will hold on to and which ones you will let go of, is a skill that can be practiced and improved.



STEP 3 PRACTICE COPING STRATEGIES

Similar to using pain relief medications for a severe injury, healthy coping can alleviate pain even if they do not fix the problem. The better and more natural you are at implementing coping strategies, the more relief you will experience during life challenges. Check the strategies below that you currently use or that you would like to try.

EMOTIONAL

- Journal your thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- Listen to inspiring music
- Talk about your feelings
- Deep breathing, meditation, positive thinking
- Allow yourself to cry
- Spend time outside and enjoy nature
- Find things that make you laugh
- Spend time with pets

PHYSICAL

- Drink water and eat healthy food
- Get enough sleep
- Find ways to help others
- Take a break from social media
- Join community organizations-volunteer

SPIRITUAL

- Ponder and meditate
- Exercise and other physical activities
- Take necessary medications
- Follow a regular routine
- Reward yourself
- Hug/hold and show appropriate affection with family and friends
- Get regular medical care

MENTAL

- Make a list of things you are thankful for
- Read or listen to uplifting books
- Help peers or younger children with schoolwork
- Write stories or poems
- Write a priority and values list
- Be open to inspiration
- Focus on what is most important to you



- Identify what is meaningful and notice its place in your life
- Pray, sing
- Make a list of your strengths and talents
- Set short- and long-term goals
- Seek accurate information from trustworthy sources
- Take a break from the news
- Avoid dwelling on rumors
- Choose to focus on helpful and accurate thoughts

SOCIAL

- Spend time with family and friends
- Invite family or friends to video chat
- Play games with others
- Connect with important people
- Invite others to dinner
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, scripture, etc.)
- Counsel with trusted Church leaders

STEP 4 SHARE AND DISCUSS

Share the responses you checked above with at least one trusted adult and a trusted peer. Discuss how you are learning to focus on helpful and accurate thoughts. Share coping strategies that work for you. Talk about how you can support each other. Continue to practice these steps and to improve your skills to face life challenges.

NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF YOUTH

Youth will face life challenges better when:

- They are connected to healthy and resilient adults
- They have safe, accessible, responsive, and engaged relationships with peers and others
- They trust that their core needs will be met (water, food, shelter, sleep clothing, health, safety, relationships, self-worth, etc.)
- They develop good social skills and improve self-control
- They practice facing, managing, and recovering from challenges
- Parents and caregivers understand their youth's development and provide support and accountability according to their capability

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HELPING YOUTH:

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network-Youth
- Kids Health for Teens
- CDC Information for Parents with Teens
- Strengthening the Family Session 4
- Adjusting to Missionary Life Resource Booklet
- Virtual Hope Box App: Apple, Google
- ACT Coach App: Apple, Google



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