

# Keep Cool in a Crisis



If you're going through a crisis, your view of the world probably isn't too rosy. Sudden, sometimes unexplainable events, like loss of a job, death of a loved one, or illness or injury, throw people into an emotional abyss. It's a crowded abyss, too: The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that in any six-month period, nearly 30 million Americans face some kind of crisis. Much of the stress triggered by a crisis arises from our perception of the event—whether we view a crisis as a challenge or a threat, an opportunity or a ticket to doom. Here are some skills that are useful for putting crises into perspective and surviving with minimal damage to emotional health.

- Visualize the future in positive, healing ways. Imagine yourself feeling good again and being happy. When people imagine themselves behaving in a particular way, the likelihood that things will turn out as expected increases.
- Learn to physically relax. It's hard to feel tense when your body is completely relaxed.
- Be realistic when you describe your situation to yourself and others. Avoid exaggerating or using emotionally charged words like “never,” “always,” or “hate.”
- Take one day at a time. Set goals you can measure and achieve, and don't demand too much of yourself.
- Don't allow yourself to get bogged down in self-pity, but be willing to accept help from others. Love, friendship, and social support are powerful coping tools for managing stress.
- Remember, you're not alone. Whatever you're going through, others have experienced and survived. You will, too.