

## Exercise sheet

# What to do if I have a crisis?

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A crisis can be the result of various situations, the death of a loved one, losing a job, the breakdown of a marriage, or a bankruptcy. When a crisis hits us, we risk getting caught up in an emotional storm that will affect both our body and our mind, triggering myriad thoughts and emotions.

Below are some of the things you can do to survive and get through it:

### I breathe slowly,

I take some deep breaths and I consciously observe the air that enters and leaves my body. This helps me to stay anchored in the present.

### I consciously observe

I observe my experience at a given moment. I note what I'm thinking. I note what I feel. I note what I'm doing.

I note how my thoughts and emotions swirl around and could easily drag me away if I let them.

### I stay open-minded

I welcome my emotions (or feelings). I breathe through them and I leave them their space. I also welcome my thoughts. I step back and give them room to move around, without hanging on to them or trying to reject them.


I observe them for what they are and leave them room to play rather than engaging with them.

### Hang on to your values

(take a look at the resource « I live in accordance with my values »)

Once the first three stages have been completed, my mind will be in full awareness mode. The next step is to respond to the crisis with a commitment to action underpinned by my values. I connect with my values: I ask myself: « do I want to be in this crisis situation? » What exactly do I want to work towards? How should I act in a way that I'm proud of when I think back to this situation in a few years time?

Points to consider:

-  **Do I need help, support or advice?** If so, which friends, neighbours, or members of my family can I get in touch with? What professionals or associations can I meet? (take a look at the resource « When calling a psychiatrist »)

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**2** Have I ever experienced anything similar? If so, which actions did I find useful in the long term? Did I learn anything relevant to this experience that could be useful to me now?

**3** Is there something I could do to improve the situation? What would it be? Is there a very small thing that I could decide to do now that would make a difference, however minimal? What would be the smallest, the simplest, the easiest small things that I could do:

in the next few minutes

in the hours that follow

in the days that follow

**4** If nothing can be done to improve the situation, then am I willing to work towards acceptance, while being fully committed to the present moment? And if the situation can't be changed, how can I use my time and energy in a constructive way, rather than worrying, blaming myself, or chewing it over. Again, I need to rely on my values: how would I like to see myself in this situation? What very small actions based on my values can I commit to?

**5** We don't choose the cards that life deals us: I can only decide how I'll play the hand I've got. In this context, it's useful to ask the following question: « Given the hand I got, what's the best way to play it? What personal strengths can I forge or develop when I play? How can I learn and grow from this experience? Note that each painful experience gives us an opportunity to develop our mindfulness.

**6** I show compassion for myself. I ask myself: « If people that I like were going through an ordeal similar to mine, feeling what I feel, and I wanted to be kind and to help them, how would I handle it? How would I behave towards them? What would I tell them or do? Now, try to adopt the same attitude towards yourself.