

# Faculty and Employee Assistance Program Newsletter

## **In Tough Times Turn Inward - A Guide to Emotional Stability During the Economic Crisis**

By Linda Nusbaum\*

It's bad out there, no question. The headlines scream at us "The worst failure... Not since the Depression... Never before in our history." Of course you're feeling upset. These are horrible things to hear.

So how can we survive this economic crisis and catastrophic predictions of the future? Turn inward. In tough times, look back, look around and look inside. As a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a former journalist who spent more than two decades covering people and crises I have some suggestions for getting through the current meltdown.

The first step is to look back. You've weathered economic downturns before, Black Monday, The Savings and Loan debacle and Midwest Farmers Crisis in the 80's. And you're still here. So the first step in your survival kit is to remember where you were and what happened to you. Did you lose money, your equilibrium, a job? Think back on your circumstances. Now consider what you used to get yourself through those crises. You may have suffered, but chances are pretty good you found a way to regroup. So I want you to spend the next few minutes acknowledging the ability you have to come back. You have innate survival skills. Every human does. You survived other economic crises; you can survive this one too.

The next step involves your own unique circumstances in your life. I don't care if you are 20 or 70 years old. You have survived difficult challenges. They could be overcoming your teenage years, failing a big exam, surviving a divorce, the loss of someone you love, loss of a job, career or business. If you are alive on this earth and you interact with society you have overcome and survived challenges along the way. Maybe you are resilient. Maybe you are determined and know how to persevere. Perhaps you can hold on to faith and hope. Maybe you are creative. Whatever tools and attributes you used to weather your own personal crises, you can use to help you now. These are your survival tools. Maybe it's time to remind yourself they are there, they are uniquely yours and they work.

Another effort you can make for yourself during this time is to practice gratitude. This means looking around your life and appreciating what you have at this moment. Maybe you have a family and you are

grateful for them. Maybe you have good friends. It could be a job or your classmates, a pet or a plant. Take stock in what is in your world right now, not what could happen or what you could lose; just appreciating what is with you right now. When you appreciate what is, you will not have the room or space in your thoughts to think about what might happen. This is a sure fire way to get you out of your worries.

And the last step is TALK TO SOMEONE. This is a gift each of us can give ourselves. When we hold on to our worries they turn into stress in our bodies. Sometimes they come out in angry outbursts or feeling overwhelmed. Sometimes we get lethargic and depressed. So how do we avoid these symptoms? We talk to someone. When we talk about our worries we release them so they don't stay in our head and fester or shift to our body and shut us down. The act of sharing your thoughts, especially your worries helps you release the stress, and this is healing. It also gives you a chance to use your own personal survival tools we talked about earlier. When you release your worry thoughts, you make room for your resilience, determination, creativity and hope.

So who do you talk to? Anyone you trust. Talk to your partner. Talk to a friend. Talk to a mentor. Talk to a colleague. Talk to someone in your faith. Talk to a licensed professional. Just talk about it.

In tough times, turn inward. You have already been a pretty good friend to yourself during difficult circumstances; your past experiences are your track record. So when you hear the next piece of bad news, turn inward, you'll find your best ally and source of strength, right inside.

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