

How do we keep going? My five coping strategies in the face of suffering and destruction

By Wayne Visser

I've been reflecting more on the question: How do we keep going (in the face of unbearable suffering and destruction in the world)? My first response was *Miracle of Life*, which you can read [here](#). Answering less poetically and more pragmatically, these are my five coping strategies:

1. Support.

Try not to face the shadows alone. It helps to have partners, friends or colleagues that you trust enough to confide in, to lean upon and be vulnerable with, to share your fears and frustrations, or your distress and pain with. They may have wise advice, or more likely and importantly, the ability to listen and empathise.

2. Sensemaking.

Draw on a set of beliefs that help you make sense of the world and your place in it, including the existence of wrongdoing, unfairness and suffering. For some, this will be their faith; for others, it may be philosophical traditions, whether homegrown or classical. I find Taoism and Stoicism most helpful.

3. Serenity.

Make sure you have a way to still your mind, settle your emotions and slow your heartbeat; a way to restore tranquility, rest and rejuvenation. This can be a helpful practice, like prayer, meditation or mindfulness, or a calming environment, like being in nature, a library, a temple or church or mosque, or other quiet space.

4. Solidarity.

Join with others, whether in person or in spirit, where you find affinity. They may be in the same situation, working towards the same goals, wrestling with the same conflicts, or carrying the same burdens. Strength in numbers is as much about moral support as amplified impact. Movements exist on the basis that change is always possible.

5. Self-care.

Look after yourself. If you lose your health, you are not much help to anyone. Staying physically active can reduce stress. So can acceptance. Accept that it's okay to feel sad, or anxious or angry. And accept the limits of your control and influence. Help where possible, but do not feel responsible for all the suffering in the world.

What are your coping strategies?

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