

How to Manage Crisis

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

One of the scariest things for any of us is being in crisis. A crisis can be defined several ways. It can be:

- the loss of a job
- a divorce
- a traumatic injury
- a death
- the alienation of a loved one due to a fight or disagreement
- a severe illness
- or even your own impending death

Crisis is absolutely one of the most challenging things we face, and when many people are in crisis, they simply cannot cope and fall apart.

The key to managing any crisis is to look towards the future while you're inside the crisis. You always need to think about the future and the fact that a better future lies ahead. Knowing there is a positive future in the picture and that you can control the future is extremely important.

Today, I saw a man speak who recently had a horrible accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. I've known other people who became paralyzed as well. Due to their paralysis, those people confined themselves to their homes and stopped living the lives they were capable of living. In the case of this man, he started diving, surfing, and doing all sorts of things he never did before he was paralyzed. Despite the fact that he cannot walk, he made his future bigger than his past.

If you were faced with the prospect of paralysis, what would you do? Would you look forward to doing things you'd never done? Or, would you decide you would make your future bigger than your past?

In terms of your life, you're going to be faced with crises at some point. You may be in crisis right now. If you recently lost a job, or are about to lose a job, you may be in crisis. I want to give you a few words of advice about how to navigate the crisis of losing a job or any other crisis in your life.

If you lost a job, the first thing you need to do is start thinking about your future and where you want to be. If you are about to lose a job, you should do the exact same thing. You need to concentrate on the future and how you're going to make your future so much better than your past.

Your future is going to be much, much better than your past because you have learned so much in your current or previous position.

- You know what employers in your industry generally like and do not like
- You presumably have dealt with more people and are now more proficient with people
- You know how to [look for employers](#) in your industry that are doing well
- You are more mature
- You know how to do your job better
- You know what aspects of your job you are good at
- You know what aspects of your job you are not good at
- You know what aspects of your job you enjoy
- You know what aspects of your job you do not enjoy

Another incredibly positive thing is you can start looking at other sorts of professions and jobs you may be good at. I've seen so many people's lives transform after they lost or left a job that I can't even remember them all. The number of success stories of people who have transformed their lives after losing jobs is inspiring. I've hired many of these people. So many positive things lie in your future if you lose your job.

I know of a guy who hated [practicing law](#) and was fired from a [law firm](#). He ended up going back to school and is planning on [becoming a professor](#). He has never been happier. I know of another guy who was fired from a law firm and ended up [becoming a recruiter](#). He has never been happier, is making more money, and is more well known than he ever was when practicing law. I know of a man who failed the bar exam in New York several times, lost his job with a big firm there, ended up moving to California, and founded one of the most prestigious law firms in the nation. I know of so many people who were in crisis, who looked towards the future when they lost a job, and ended up changing the world as we know it. Lee Iacocca, for example, was fired from Ford Motor Company. He went over to Chrysler and literally saved the company. He became world famous in the process. He made the absolute best of a huge crisis.

People who succeed when losing jobs are able to get a perspective on their lives they wouldn't normally get. This incredible perspective is something that enables them to dramatically increase their options and long-term happiness.

If you're in crisis, feel good about this. The crisis is going to force you to reexamine your life, and see what opportunities are potentially awaiting you. You will now be able to get out of what may have been a rut. This is something that's incredibly positive and you should be happy about it.

In a divorce, for example, people will learn a lot about themselves. They will learn the sort of mate they get along with and do not get along with. They will learn about aspects of themselves that one mate may not like and that they need to be with a

mate who happens to like that particular aspect of themselves. They will learn how they want and do not want to be treated. If you are in a crisis in a relationship right now (and you believe it's not solvable), look to the future and the fact that you will one day have a much better mate who appreciates you.

If you are in a job right now that you don't like and are in "crisis," look towards the future and see there is likely something out there that will be meaningful for you.

Look towards the future when you are in crisis.

I have been in crisis situations many times. I have been in these situations in my career and in my personal life. Whenever I find myself in a crisis, I just do what I am telling you right now: I look towards the future. You can feel bad all you want about the present situation you are in. This is what most people do. In fact, a lot of people spend their entire lives feeling bad about their situation and the life they are in. For example, they find friends and other people who will listen to how bad their situation is, and they sit around talking about this incessantly. They wallow, and may eat or abuse food or something else, while feeling bad about their situation. They simply don't allow themselves to enjoy life because they focus on what is wrong with the present. This is a serious problem for many people.

The thing about the future is that it's always getting better. Even if you're about to die, depending upon your religious beliefs, you may be about to go to heaven or some other incredible place. You can mourn your departure from this earth, but you can also look towards the future.

- If you are sick, look towards the future.
- If you didn't get into the college you wanted to get into, look towards the future. Maybe you can get into a better [graduate school](#) than the college you went to.
- If you didn't get the job you wanted when you applied, don't give up. Look towards the future, because you may be able to work for that employer again.
- The future is always improving.

Juan Enriquez, the founding director of Harvard Business School [Life Sciences](#) Project, has written extensively on the topic of the future. One of the most interesting topics he studies is how we are now in a position, using stem cells and other methods, where we can regrow teeth such as molars in a petri dish. We can regrow the ear of a soldier injured in battle. We can regrow a bladder. We are even in a position now, where we are working on artificial eyes.

The future that Enriquez sees is one where we will actually be a different class of humans that he calls "Homo Evolutis." This name signifies that our species is continually evolving. Instead of being content with being able to hear, like we do right now, through science we will be able to engineer ourselves to hear like bats if we choose. Instead of seeing things normally like we do now, we will also be able to see infrared if we want. We are very, very close to doing this because we are taking direct control of the evolution of our own species.

These findings are profound and they signify to me that even if we are deaf, if we cannot see, if we are missing an ear, if we've lost our bladder to illness, there is hope. There are incredible miracles out there for the taking and the most important thing we can do is look towards the future when we are in crisis.

The future can always be better than the past if we allow ourselves to focus on what is possible.

You manage crisis by looking towards the future and what you can accomplish there instead of dwelling on where you are right now.

THE LESSON

Crisis is among the most challenging things that anyone can face and many people cannot cope and fail in the face of it. To survive in the midst of a crisis, look to the future. Doing so will make you feel more confident about your current situation. Crises can force you to reexamine your life, and make you seek out potential opportunities. The future can always be better than the present or past, and focusing on the future can be incredibly positive and guide you out of what may have been a rut.

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