

The Men's Toolbox



Tool for
men

How to Pick Yourself Up After a Setback

Everyone has had their share of tough times. But how do you specifically get through a particularly tough setback or trauma?

Here are ideas and tips from actual men who have gotten back up after a setback. Go through the questions to think about the best course of action for your own situation.

1 Give yourself time to recognize and absorb what happened to you

When you get bad news, you may feel a little stunned or angry or not feel anything at all. It's normal to need some time to absorb the shock. You didn't choose to be sick, have an accident, separate from your partner, have a loved one die, or lose your job.

When these things happen, you may need to give yourself the best conditions to get through those initial days. What are your best conditions?

I felt like I was in a fog. I told my boss I was taking a leave of absence and told my spouse that I was moving back in with my mom. Then I went to the doctor. He asked me what I did when I felt like I was in a haze when I was driving. I told him that I would pull over so that I wouldn't hurt anyone. I realized that's what I did. I pulled over out of traffic to see things more clearly.

2 Recognize what you are already doing to help you stay afloat

Maybe you don't see it yet, but you're already doing things to prevent your situation from getting worse. Take the time to answer the questions below to help you identify things that are helping you stay afloat.

- What things help me to keep going?
- Who can help me do what I need to do, even if I don't want to?
- What should I avoid to keep the situation from getting worse?
- Since being in this situation, what thoughts have given me hope that I'll get through it?
- If there is one thing I need to keep doing to keep my head above water, what is it?

I realized it's okay to go without showering and binge watch Netflix. But after more than 2 or 3 days, I know I'm getting depressed. I know myself and watch for the signs.

3 Remember what worked for you in the past

This is not the first time that life has tested you. Even if the event or context has changed, you are still the same person. Remember what worked for you in the past and do the same thing to get through this new rough patch. However, you can't always "cut and paste"; you may need to adjust things to your new situation. The questions below may help you:

- What small acts made a difference in my day?
- What helped me stay hopeful?
- What actions did I keep up even though I didn't feel like it, because I knew they were good for me?
- What beliefs, actions, thoughts or people have been most helpful to me?
- What were the first signs that the worst was over? What did I do when I realized that?

After my work accident, I would decide on the most important thing to do the next day (e.g., fill out my insurance papers). It was very important to choose what I was going to do the night before. I would get up and didn't have to think. I would just do it. Otherwise, I would look at my list in the morning, get discouraged and start playing video games. I remembered that trick when I separated from my ex. Doing one important thing a day is what helped me stay the course.

4 Reconsider getting help from a professional or a community organization

It's important to build on your strengths to get through a rough patch. But it can be easy to forget your strengths when you're in the thick of a problem. This is when an outside viewpoint can help you get a different perspective.

Some men are pleasantly surprised to find that it's easier to talk to a stranger. Your new situation could be an opportunity to try out a resource to decide if it's right for you.

My work offered me therapy with a psychologist. I got the sense that they just wanted to feel like they were doing the right thing, but I went anyway. It felt good and I kept going. Therapy helps me see more clearly. I have many decisions to make and it's easier to talk them through with someone who doesn't have to live with the consequences.

5 Stay connected with people who make you feel good

Circumstances may have caused you to lose touch with the people in your life. But reconnecting with them could make them feel relieved and reassured. You may not have heard from your friends because they don't know what to say.

It doesn't matter how you lost touch; reconnecting with friends and family who do you good is always beneficial. Don't isolate yourself. Isolation can be more detrimental than the situation itself. You don't need to go into a big explanation of what happened. The following questions may help you find the quickest way to reconnect with others.

- Who would be the easiest person to reconnect with?
- Who would like to hear from me?
- Who would like to do an activity or sport with me?
- Who could help me finish a project that is weighing on me right now?
- Who might need me?
- Who can I talk to about what happened?

One of my buddies called me and said, "Since you've lost your job, you don't have an excuse for missing the fishing trip this year!" I told him I didn't have any money to pay my share, but he told me that they had already taken care of it. I decided not to be stubborn, I got over my pride and went on the trip. It was good to see my friends again... I realized that I was the one who had isolated myself. They were just waiting for me to come around.



6 Remember what's really important to you

Going through a hard time can actually turn into a change for the better. No one thinks that when they have just been through something upsetting, but they often realize it once the ordeal is over. Some men say, "I wouldn't wish what happened to me on my worst enemy, but it gave me the motivation to make changes."

You may find yourself appreciating moments that used to seem unimportant. You may feel like reviewing your priorities. Here are some questions to help you recognize what might be even more important to you from now on.

- What strengths did I find in myself that I didn't know I had?
- What priorities have changed for me?
- What decisions have influenced the person I have become?
- What values have surfaced for me?
- Which relationships have become more important?

I never thought depression could happen to me. I now know that it can happen to anyone. The other day, I went up to a guy who looked really down. I asked him if he wanted to go have a cigarette. He said, "But you don't smoke!" He got up anyway. We went outside and talked. I'm happy to have gotten where I am. I've always said that it is important to be supportive, but I still judged people who were depressed. I wish I hadn't gone through it, but I'm proud of what I've become.

To consult all the tools in the toolbox and the references for this document

www.polesbeh.ca/en/documentation/mens-toolbox

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Useful sites

- allume.org (in French)
To assist distressed men aged 35 to 49 find help. The site also provides a self-assessment tool.
- [Suicide Prevention Centres directory](#) (in French)
1-866-APPELLE – Toll free 1-866-277-3553
To prevent suicide (for you or a loved one). Some centers offer services in English.
- [Créer la résilience \[video\]](#) (in French)
Brigitte Lavoie, TEDx Talks HEC Montréal.
- headsuptguys.org
To support men in their fight against depression and provide advice, tools and information.
- interligne.co
For people affected by sexual and gender diversity issues: listening and intervention services, etc.
- 811 line ([Info-Santé](#) and [Info-Social](#))
To contact a nurse or a social worker free of charge either for you or a loved one.
- myrelief.ca (formerly Revivre)
To support people living with anxiety, depression or bipolar disorder and their loved ones.
- ordrepsy.qc.ca (in French)
To find a psychologist in your area.
- [211 service](#)
To find information about community, public and parapublic services in your area, throughout Quebec.
- suicide.ca
To chat confidentially with professionals or get advice.
- telaide.org – Toll free 1-855-365-4463
Confidential line for mental health, violence, addiction, abuse and bullying, loneliness.

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