

# **10 COPING STRATEGIES**

Dealing With Major  
Disappointments In Life

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# Introduction

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While we grow accustomed to certain emotions with time, disappointment never gets easier. For some, they opt to become pessimists – if they never look forward to anything it's difficult to get disappointed. With every fresh day, there is an opportunity for new disappointment. If that's the way you approach the day, though, then you're setting yourself up for failure after failure.

Disappointments might be life-changing, they could be small inconveniences. You know how it goes. Your team finally made it to the championship and you feel like it's finally your time only for them to blow it with minutes to go.

You might not make the big bucks for play for them, but you very much feel a part of the team and their journey. It feels like a major blow at the moment it occurs, and you may be bummed for a day or two, but you bounce back fairly quickly because you know there's always next year. That's a small inconvenience, as maddening as it can be.



A major disappointment, on the other hand, can derail your life. For example, when you lose a longtime friendship. As we get older it's only natural for our views and priorities to change and sometimes that means we leave friends behind.

Just because that's a fact of life doesn't mean it's easy to take when it happens. Losing a longtime friendship is much like going through the breakup of a romantic relationship. All of the wonderful memories you had have been touched by sadness and tinged by your perception of that person now.

Obviously, we're not talking about friends that drift away, we're talking about divergent views that literally end a friendship. It hurts. It's disappointing and it's one of the biggest disappointments in life.

Regardless of the size, they simply add more stress to the existing stress you are dealing with in life. With that in mind, we have compiled ten coping strategies for dealing with major disappointments in life, whether it's because you missed out on the promotion you worked hard for and deserved or your relationship fell apart.

# 10 Coping Strategies For Disappointment

## Acknowledge Your Feelings

You cannot escape your feelings. While it might be tempting to launch a full-on avoidance-focused coping mechanism the only thing you achieve by doing this is a delay. While you may need a distraction mechanism briefly to escape severe emotions, that's a short-term solution.



You have to acknowledge your feelings and deal with the issue head-on. It's really easy to slip into blaming others or lashing out at the people around you but this is futile and you can express your emotions honestly without harming everyone around you.

What's important here is how you feel about what's going on and focusing on *that* rather than casting blame or hurting other people because you're upset. You can articulate those emotions without attacking people. There's a balance to be struck by letting people know how you feel while being respectful.

Know this – there isn't a right way or a wrong way to feel. When you experience disappointment, your immediate emotional reaction is an honest response and those feelings are valid. That means it's important to vocalize your feelings and thoughts, otherwise, you will stress yourself out harboring resentment and hate will foment within you.

Don't be afraid to be honest with yourself and with others about how you're feeling about the situation at hand. This is an emotion-focused coping strategy and it will help you get things under control long enough that you can plan your problem-focused approach if necessary.

## **Get Perspective**

Even the smallest disappointment can seem massive at first. Once you have a chance to express your anger, frustration, and hurt and you have the emotional bandwidth to take a step back you can see the big picture. The big picture will help you get to grips with how small the disappointment actually is. You need perspective. This disappointment hurts like hell right now, but what will it matter this time next year? Will it matter a month from now? Will it be an issue one week from now? A day?



It's easy to breathe when you're not paying attention, but when stress starts to kick up breathing deeply is the first thing we forget to do. So, now is your opportunity to take a deep breath, comport yourself, and go for a walk to clear your head. Take the time and space you need to work through your disappointment and get perspective on the situation.

While perspective may seem like it's an emotion-focused approach, it's actually a combination of emotion and problem-focused strategies. Taking time and space to get perspective requires a conscious decision. It's easy to feel like bad things keep happening to you, but you can't allow doubt to creep in.

Even if disappointment feels like a failure, know that it isn't. And even if it was a failure, that's okay, too. Failure comes with plenty of positives and it's only temporary. Disappointment comes to all, it isn't unique to you. We will all experience disappointment at one time or another. So, don't beat yourself up and worry about what you could have done differently. Take the lesson and move forward.

## **Adjust**

Sometimes there are solutions to be found or compromises to make when you are faced with disappointment. Look, you can't always get what you want. However, that doesn't mean there's not a second option available or another path forward.

You can take time to reassess and if necessary, make adjustments. When you face disappointment it's easy to lose your mind. Let's look at things differently; this might be a sign that it's time for you to reexamine your priorities.

It might be a tiny change or it could be a massive one, that will all depend on the degree of disappointment you're faced with. The point is that, in life, you have to be flexible. Be prepared to make adjustments, refocus your attention, and work through any disappointment you might face.

## **Social Support**

Your network of friends and family will play an important role in overcoming the emotions and stress that come from major disappointments. Not only will your social support network offer you a shoulder to cry on and a listening ear, but they can also offer you objective advice.

Our friends and family are the people who carry us through the most difficult times of our lives, and that stands whether you're dealing with the grief of loss or, you didn't get the job you applied for.

Talk to others. Express your feelings. Brainstorm what happened. With that being said, don't take any possible negative reactions or opinions of others to heart. We all have different views and you aren't necessarily being attacked just because someone's opinion differs from yours. They may have a different perspective that you can use or they may not. Either way





when you listen to and bounce things off others, you learn, even if it just through your own out loud expression of the problem.

## **Manage Your Social Interactions**

While social support is important, it's just as important to set boundaries and choose your people selectively. When you're dealing with your own disappointment, the last thing you want is to turn to someone who is not supportive or who will then dump their disappointments on you.

So, if there's someone in your life who always makes a major deal out of every little thing that goes wrong, then they're not the right person to turn to. If they take everything as a personal affront, then they're not the right person to turn to.

You know the type of person we're talking about. It's your friend that is adamant about the boss having it out for them, the driver who purposefully cut them off on the freeway this morning, etc.

If it's someone who finds a way to put a negative spin on absolutely everything, then that's not someone you want to turn to. So, as important as it is to seek social support it's equally as important that you seek the *right* social support. Therefore, effectively managing your social interactions is a combined effort from problem and emotion-focused coping strategies.

- Choose positive people.
- Choose caring people.
- Choose people who listen without judgement.
- Choose people you feel are your role models.

## **Journal**

Disappointment breeds distress and one of the best ways to get it all out of your system is writing it out. There's something cathartic about keeping a journal and it might not seem much, but it's a good place to start.

It's a safe space for you to start expressing emotions and concerns in a non-threatening way. The journal will not judge you and it will listen to whatever you have to say. So, pick up a journal and start free writing until you get it all out. It's an effective way to release pain, but it goes beyond that, it can also help you rebuild your strength.

## **Stress Management**

Stress and anxiety exacerbate disappointment so you have to find your sweet spot when it comes to getting relief quickly. Fast and efficient stress management tools include music, long walks, bubble baths, meditation, yoga, and exercise. When you are stressed out in general or feeling anxious it makes you far more sensitive when faced with disappointment.

So, in times of heightened stress (like the entirety of 2020), you are more prone to agitation and disappointment is likely to take a bigger toll on you. So, when you are stressed out in general a disappointing situation that may normally hit you as a four suddenly becomes a ten because you're wearing a negative filter. A negative filter is basically the lens by which we focus exclusively on negatives and catastrophize everything.



Stress management is a problem-focused approach in that it's a proactive strategy you choose to remain calmer the majority of the time so that you are better equipped to cope with disappointment and stressful situations.

Yoga, meditation, journaling, rest, relaxation, distractions, progressive muscle relaxation are great stress relief strategies.

## **Address Your Mindset**

Your mindset is just like a muscle, in that the more you practice being a positive person the easier it becomes. Your brain is wired to hone in on all of the negativity. Negativity is a non

self-supportive mindset. It brings us down. Conversely, positivity empowers you in every way, including your ability to cope with life challenges and disappointments.

How do you actively improve your mindset? Make a gratitude list. Update it often. You can start your day off right by listing all of the incredible things in your life. Gratitude will help you rewire your brain to seek out positivity and focus on that. It might be a brand new job or perhaps it's something simple like the fantastic pot of coffee you have brewing.

## **Relaxation Techniques**

Deep breathing can help you regain control of your emotional center. When you're under stress and dealing with anxiety and disappointment your brain's emotional response kicks in. A bit of deep breathing can put you back in the driver's seat and that's exactly what you need when you're trying to deal with disappointment effectively.

You can't control disappointment, you can't control what life throws your way. The only thing you *can* do is proactively tackle the emotions these issues cause and find ways to counteract or alleviate them.



**Great relaxation techniques include:**

- Yoga
- Guided imagery
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Massage
- Hot baths
- Reading
- Playing games
- Listening to music

It doesn't have to be deemed an official relaxation technique for it to work. If there are activities you know are relaxing to you, then don't be afraid to practice them often and incorporate them into your day regularly.

## **Know Your Heart**

The truth of the matter is that disappointment can ripple through you and strike you to your core. If you aren't aligned with your core values (or you don't even know what they are), then there's a good chance you don't have the framework of support that you need to manage the emotions that disappointment will bring.

As an example, if you count an open heart as a core value, then you have to be prepared to share kindness and love with others, regardless of how they behave. It means you will try to act and react with love rather than veer towards negativity. If someone disappoints you, you may immediately feel like closing down but then you remember that core value and you choose your value.

Know your values, know your heart, and when you do, you will be better positioned to cope with any disappointment life can throw your way. Or, any other stressful situation or circumstances that may come your way, whether it's related to disappointment or not.

You can choose to let disappointment drive you or you can choose your values and live in alignment with them. It's the latter that will carry you through the toughest times.

# Summary

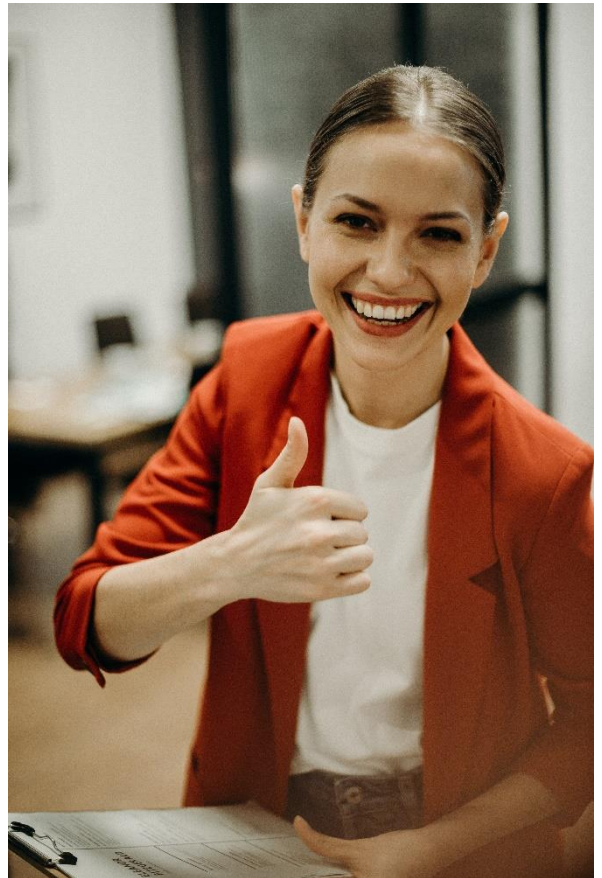
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Embrace positivity rather than stewing in negativity. It might be inevitable, but it's important to remember that disappointment is on a spectrum just as most things in life are.

The stronger you allow it to grow the more of a negative impact it will have. If left to fester disappointment can grow into depression and discouragement.

The longer you stew in your disappointment the more discouraged you will grow. The more discouraged you grow the more likely you are to struggle with anxiety and depression. The coping strategies discussed above will help turn the tables on disappointment.

You can move the dial on where disappointment falls on your spectrum by getting control of your baseline stress levels and being ready with healthy coping strategies.



**Every successful person on this planet has been dealt a disappointing blow at one time or another.**

- Successful people are successful because they don't quit after disappointment.
- When they face disappointment, they learn.
- When they experience failure, they learn.
- When they take a misstep, they learn.

You don't have to gloss over your feelings, but you can learn to manage disappointment and overcome it effectively. You have to be your own best friend instead of your own worst enemy.

Do not underestimate the power of a great set of coping strategies, whether it's emotion-focused or problem-focused.

**You've got this!**