

A scenic view of a beach framed by two trees. The background shows a blue ocean with white waves, a sandy beach, and a clear sky. The trees are in the foreground, framing the scene.

Surmounting Life's Challenges

by
Deborah J. Armstrong, Psy.D.

**7 Strategies
to Help Build
Resilience!**

**“And Caleb...said...,
We are well able to overcome.”
Numbers 13:30**

Surmounting Life's Challenges:
7 Coping Strategies to Help Build Resilience

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Cover photograph: Lake at America's Keswick, Whiting, New Jersey

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Foreword

How do you take care of yourself emotionally when you find yourself feeling frustrated, upset, or distressed? A first recourse for many people is to pray. Another common solution is to talk with a counselor.

In addition, there are **coping strategies** that you can learn and practice at home. If you are already in counseling, coping strategies may help you to better care for your emotional wellbeing in between counseling sessions, and after you complete counseling.

Perhaps you have already mastered some coping strategies and found them useful. I hope that you may find additional help in the following pages.

Deborah J. Armstrong, Psy.D.

Strategy 1

Relaxing with Slow Music

When a person listens to music that is **60 beats per minute** (60 bpm), the person's heart rate begins to synchronize to the beat of the music, one beat per second. This is a **resting heart rate**.

You can test this for yourself by setting aside some quiet time, putting on music that is 60 bpm, listening for five minutes to allow your heart rate to adjust to the rhythm of the music, then taking your pulse.

As a person's heart rate slows, **blood pressure decreases, breathing slows, and brain waves enter an alpha pattern associated with relaxation**, which may then facilitate falling sleep. This is the concept behind a slow lullaby, and the time-honored practice of singing a baby to sleep. Research suggests that in some cases music may be as powerful as medication.

You may find that you relax more deeply if you lie down instead of sitting while you listen. Some people find that slow music facilitates a transition to sleep.

Caution

Do not use slow music to relax while driving or operating machinery.

The Supernatural Advantage

When slow music is combined with Scripture or worship lyrics, the Spirit of God may use the music to increase peace and communion with Him in what some have called “*soaking prayer*.” The use of music to bring peace and spiritual deliverance goes back thousands of years.

It is written in I Samuel 16:23b, that David took a harp, “*and played with his hand,*” and “*Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.*” (KJV)

Some sources of slow worship music include:

- Awakening, Volume 1, by Kevin Zadai, available free online at <https://youtu.be/-TujQmiQp1I>, and on CD through <https://warriornotes.netviewshop.com/shopDetail/CD041>

- Julie True’s free Online Healing Room at <https://julietrue.com/pages/online-healing-room>

- Marty Goetz’ song, “The Love of God,” available free online at <https://youtu.be/-UhM7geFSNw>, or on CD through <https://store.martygoetz.com/products/THE-LOVE-OF-GOD-CD-p386322404>

To experience the benefit of slow worship music, you may select one of the links above, or turn on some other slow worship music, yield to the Holy Spirit, and invite Him to minister the Heart of our Abba to you.

Strategy 2

Preparing Your Mind and Body to Rest

Preparing your mind and body to rest may facilitate sleep. Adequate rest correlates with improved cognitive function and task performance.

What steps can I take to prepare my mind and body to rest?

A first step toward preparing your mind and body to rest is to remove distractions from your environment. You may want to turn your phone off at night, or silence the ringer, so that your rest is not interrupted by it. If there is a television or music going in the background, you may want to turn it off so that it doesn't compete with your plan to prepare to rest. An exception would be slow music that might facilitate relaxation.

Calm your mind by focusing on things that are positive:

What happened today that you are happy about?

What did you accomplish today that you are thankful to have done?

What happened today that you might like to handle differently another time?

See that event as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Consider learning and practicing a relaxation exercise as part of your preparation to sleep.

The Supernatural Advantage

It is written in Psalm 107:20, *"He sent His Word, and healed them."* (KJV)

In my experience, those who have meditated on Scripture between counseling sessions have seen better and more sustained outcomes than those who rely on counseling alone.

If you would like to try a Scripture meditation, you may visit the site below.

<https://wordsthatheal.net/ssl/meditations>

A Peace from beyond the natural realm is available to those who follow Jesus. It is written in Colossians 3:15, *"Let the Peace of Christ have power over your hearts. You were chosen as a part of His body. Always be thankful."* (NLV)

Strategy 3

Picturing the Future That You Want

You can picture the future that you want. You can create a video of the future that you desire in your mind.

For example, let your mind go forward to a time and a task that you need to accomplish later today or tomorrow. What outcome do you want? What do you want to see happen?

How do you want to be feeling in your body while you do this task?

What do you need to do now to position yourself for that outcome later?

How would you feel if you were accomplishing that task in the way that you desire to accomplish it?

Now picture yourself handling that task in the way that you would like to handle it. What would you be thinking if you were accomplishing that task in the way that you would like to accomplish it?

What name would you give to your video?

Look back over your answers. Run the video in your mind from beginning to end. Add music and sound effects and special effects if you want.

You may replay this video in your mind multiple times during the day as you prepare to complete the task. Let yourself bask in the prospect of performing this task in a way that you feel proud of.

The Supernatural Advantage

Picturing Who You Are in Jesus

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a vision of yourself as God sees you - complete in Jesus, filled with all the fullness of God, shining with His Glory, and immersed in the Love of our Heavenly Bridegroom, *Yeshua*.

Envision yourself being who you long to be in Him, the you that you would like to grow into as a part of His Beloved Bride. How do you see yourself?

What are you doing as a part of His Beloved Bride?

How do you feel?

What do you need to do now to position yourself for that outcome?

What name would you give your vision?

Look back over your answers. Contemplate the vision in your mind. Ask, “Holy Spirit, is there anything else that You would want to reveal to me about the future that You desire for me as part of the Bride?”

You may meditate on this vision in your mind all day long while you are engaged in other tasks. Let yourself rejoice in knowing that with God all things are possible,

and that as you yield to His Holy Spirit, you can take the next step into the vision that He has given you, and feel proud of running your race well.

Strategy 4

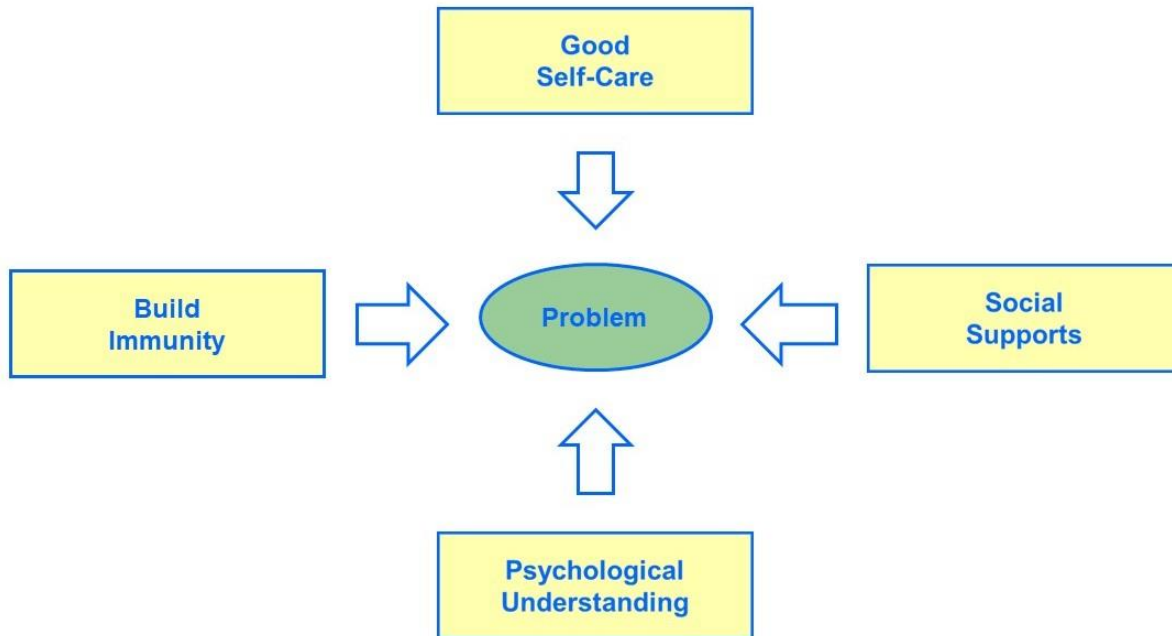
Improving Self-Care

What am I already doing to help care for myself?

What more can I do to promote a good outcome?

Multimodal Treatment

I move more effectively toward wholeness as I bring multiple resources to bear on a problem. These resources may be natural or supernatural.



I exercise Good Self-Care.

1. I eat foods that are good for me at the proper time and in proper amounts.
2. I hydrate. I keep pure water with me.
3. I rest. Even as I go about my day, I rest inside. I operate from a place of rest inside me.
4. I move. I walk. I bike. I dance through the day.
5. I read uplifting material. I watch uplifting videos.

I treasure my Social Supports.

1. I stay in touch with trusted friends by phone, by email, and in person.
2. I benefit from regular participation in a group with others who value me and who have my best interests at heart.
3. I am part of something that is bigger than me. I do something every day to benefit others in need.

I develop my Psychological Understanding.

1. I monitor my thinking. I focus on things that are lovely and good. I identify and evict self-sabotaging thoughts. I replace them with thoughts that move me forward toward my goals.
2. I choose behaviors that move me forward toward my goals. I celebrate my successes.

I build my Immunity.

1. I educate myself about wholistic approaches to health, including natural supplements.
2. I am willing to take medicine, if indicated.

The Supernatural Advantage

It is written in Ephesians 3:13-21 that Abba grants me to be strengthened by His Holy Spirit so “that Christ may dwell” in my heart “by faith,” that I may be “rooted and grounded in Love,” and experience with all the saints “the Love of Christ,” and “be filled with all the fullness of God.” (KJV)

**Oh, Abba,
I take in the Truth
of Your Infinite Love for me,**

of how Precious I am to You,
and of Your Good Plans for me Today,
through the Word of God made alive in me
in Your Spirit
as I obey.

I rest in You and in Your Love for me.

**Oh, Lord Jesus,
I dance through the day with You
in Love and in Joy,**

and You lead me to triumph over every challenge.

I celebrate the Victory with You in advance.

In Your Precious Name. Amen.

Strategy 5

Refocusing on The Positive

Some people have found themselves preoccupied with a past event long after it is over. They have spent time ruminating that could be more fruitfully spent on other things.

How can I stop overthinking?

The first step is to identify negative thoughts. Negative thoughts most often fall into four categories:

1. Negative thoughts about the self, leading to feeling down on the self, or to self-condemnation.
2. Negative thoughts about others, which can lead to blaming.
3. Negative thoughts about the world in general, which can be demotivating.
4. Negative thoughts about the future.

The second step is to challenge the negative thought. In what ways is the negative thought not true, or not entirely true?

(A counseling approach that has a good track record of helping people learn to challenge negative thoughts is Cognitive Processing Therapy, also known as CPT. For more information on CPT, you may visit www.drdeboraharmstrong.com/cpt.)

The third step is to identify a more constructive thought and refocus on the more constructive thought. In other words, you replace the negative thought with a constructive thought. This is the most effective way to stop unwanted thoughts from returning, as you fill your mind with thoughts that promote wholeness and more effective decision-making.

Examples of constructive thoughts include:

- I can take the next step toward who I want to be.
- I can ask for and receive help.

Refocusing on the Positive

Everyone has challenges. These challenges may range from a childhood trauma to a difficult conversation yesterday with a friend, family member, or coworker.

The impact of the event itself may be compounded by subsequent overthinking, or ruminating. The initial impact of the event is made worse if negative beliefs about the self, negative beliefs about others, or negative beliefs about the future, have come to feel true following the event.

The growth opportunity that comes with each challenge is to identify and overcome those negative, and not entirely accurate, beliefs. (To learn more about evidence-based psychotherapy approaches to overcoming the impact of trauma, you may visit drdeboraharmstrong.com/emdr and drdeboraharmstrong.com/cpt.)

Meanwhile, at home, you can practice shifting your focus away from the negative. This strategy is a combination of thought-stopping, and refocusing on something that is positive and uplifting.

The Supernatural Advantage

What should I refocus on?

I am glad you asked. Our Great Physician has several Divine Prescriptions. We are not limited to this realm. We can refocus on what is Real and Eternal, and help bring the supernatural realm into this realm by renewing our minds in the Truth of the Word of God.

Rx: Refocus on What is True, and Lovely, and Good

It is written in Philippians 4:8, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (KJV)*

Rx: Refocus on the Glory of God

The ultimate Person to refocus on is God, for it is written in Isaiah 45:22,
“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I Am God, and there is none else.” (KJV)

As we, in our spirits, focus on the Lord, we become more like Him in our character. Paul says that, as we gaze on Him, we are transformed *“from Glory to Glory...by the Spirit of the Lord.” (KJV)*

It is written in II Corinthians 3:18, *“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s Glory, are being transformed into His image, (His likeness,) with ever-increasing Glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (NIV)*

Rx: Refocus on the Wonderful Things God Says

About You

You are God’s Masterpiece, His Poem, His Work of Art. It is written in Ephesians 2:10, *“We have become His poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny He has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, God planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it!” (TPT)*

Abba, I Am Your Masterpiece

Abba, I am Your Masterpiece.

I am Your Poem.

I am Your Work of Art.

I am a Pillar

carved to adorn Your Palace.

I am Fully Equipped
in Messiah Yeshua
to complete *all*
the Good Works
that You have ordained
in advance
for me to do Today.

I am Beautiful in You.

I am Adorable.

My voice is Sweet to You,
and my face is Lovely.

I am Without Spot and Blameless.

I am Pure.

I look to You and am Radiant;
my face is Unashamed.

To access the Scriptures on which the preceding affirmations are based, as well as other free downloads, you may visit www.wordsthatheal.net/ssl/downloads.

Rx: Refocus on God's Good Plans for Your Future

God has good plans for your future. It is written in Jeremiah 29:11, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (NIV)*

Strategy 6

Forgiving

What is Forgiveness? Does Forgiveness Mean That I Have to Get Hurt All Over Again?

Forgiveness is *not*...

- Forgiveness does *not* mean putting ourselves back in the same situation with a person who is unrepentant to get hurt all over again. Even the Apostle Paul advised people to be cautious toward Alexander the coppersmith, who had done Paul “much harm.”
- Forgiveness is *not* the same as reconciliation.

Reconciliation can happen when the other person repents, acknowledges that their behavior caused harm, and stops engaging in the harmful behavior.

Forgiveness, on the other hand, can be extended unilaterally, even if the offending person doesn't want or receive the forgiveness offered.

Forgiveness is...

- cancelling the debt the other person owes us. I do not require them to make amends.
- recognizing that the other person has a free will. I do not require them to be kind to me or even to acknowledge that they did wrong. However, if they persist in harming me, I may implement consequences and remove myself from them.

Why do we forgive?

- Because it hurts us if we don't forgive. Holding onto anger and mentally rehearsing the wrong done imprisons a person in an unhealthy thought matrix.
- Because unforgiveness robs me if I allow it. Unforgiveness is like taking out a loan at exorbitant interest and making daily payments of interest and never seeing the principal go down. Every minute that a person spends ruminating on the evil that was done to them is forfeited. Those minutes can add up to an hour, or a year, or a lifetime of lost opportunities.

What about confrontation?

Sometimes we need to find a kind and loving way to let a person who hurt us know that a behavior hurt, so that they have the opportunity to try a new behavior and grow.

The Supernatural Advantage

- When we forgive, we open the way for our Abba in Heaven to forgive us. Jesus said, *“Make sure you forgive the faults of others so that your Father in Heaven will also forgive you. But if you withhold forgiveness from others, your Father withholds forgiveness from you.” Matthew 6:14-15 (TPT)*
- When we forgive, we leave the past behind, and we can move forward in freedom into the good plans that God has for each of us. It is written in Jeremiah 29:11, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (NIV)*
- The Holy Spirit teaches us to go beyond forgiveness and love one another. What does supernatural love for an enemy look like? Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:44, *“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (KJV)*

Abba, in Jesus'/Yeshua's Name, we bless those who curse us, we do good to those who hate us, and we pray for them who spitefully use us, and persecute us. Amen.

How Can I Forgive?

First, Get Current on My Own Stuff

I've been forgiven much myself. If I have hurt someone, I need to:

1. Admit it.
2. Apologize.
3. Ask forgiveness.

Am I current on all the things that I myself need to confess and apologize and ask forgiveness for?

Second, Consider Dropping It

If it is a petty offense against me, I have the ability to just drop it. I can choose to ignore it.

Third, Avoid Paybacks

Even if it's a BIG and deliberate offense against me, if I try to pay it back, I have already lost. If I descend to the adversary's level, no one wins.

Should I Confront?

How do I decide if the situation requires me to confront the one opposing me?

1. Was the intensity of my reaction greater than the situation warranted? For example, did the situation remind me of something that I went through years ago that has never been resolved? Am I more irritable than usual because I haven't had enough sleep?
2. How confident am I that my perception of this situation is accurate?
3. On a scale from zero to 10, where zero is not essential at all, and 10 is the most important that I can imagine, how essential is it to me to confront this? Am I willing to lose the relationship over this?
4. Is the offense out of character, or have I observed a pattern of behaving that has been interfering with the harmony that I desire in this relationship?
5. Have I thought about what stressors the other person may currently be going through? Is it possible that the other person has a history of trauma?

6. If I take no action, how likely is it that the offense will recur and hurt others?

The Supernatural Advantage

- Jesus taught His followers to seek to resolve conflict privately with another person before involving others. It is written in Matthew 18:15 that Jesus said, *“If your fellow believer sins against you, you must go to that one privately and attempt to resolve the matter. If he responds, your relationship is restored.” (TPT)*

- If the other person is resistant, Jesus taught His followers to bring in one or two others. It is written in Matthew 18:16 that Jesus said, *“But if his heart is closed to you, then go to him again, taking one or two others with you. You’ll be fulfilling what the Scripture teaches when it says, ‘Every word may be verified by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’” (TPT)*

Reference

The section, How Can I Forgive?, was adapted from a sermon on forgiveness given by Pastor George Bowen of Converge Church, Moorestown, New Jersey, on October 18, 2015.

Strategy 7

Finding Supportive Others

Who has been supportive of my goals?

**What interactions with others
have I found encouraging and uplifting?**

Finding Supportive Others

Healthy communication stimulates the mind and protects against cognitive deterioration. You may already engage in some of the following social activities. If not, you may consider:

- Walking and talking with a friend or neighbor.
- Inviting friends or family to dinner.
- Connecting by phone or video chat with supportive others.
- Joining a chat group that is focused on your particular area of interest.
- Joining a book club.
- Signing up for an interactive online class.

List below other ideas that come to mind:

The Supernatural Advantage:

One In The Spirit

It is written in John 17:20-21a that, just before His arrest, Jesus prayed for His followers to be one in the Spirit of God:

“And I ask not only for these disciples,
but also for all those who will one day
believe in Me through their message. (That’s us!)
I pray for them all to be joined together as one.” (TPT)

You may already have found fellowship and support with likeminded others, with those who are spiritually on the same page as you are. If not, I encourage you, don’t stop until you find what you are looking for.

Regular small group interaction with others who encourage you and support you in your faith promotes both spiritual and psychological health. With others who love God, and who value both themselves and you, you can grow deeper in the things of God. When you are around others who love God and you, who treat both themselves and you with respect, then you can watch both yourself and them mature in the things of God.

To find a small group Bible study fellowship near you, you may visit <https://kevinzadai.com/>, or ask your local pastor.

Conclusion

I am grateful for your desire to deal more effectively with life's challenges. Thank you for considering the strategies within these pages. I hope you found something here that was useful to you.

May the Holy Spirit of God continue to lead you and guide you, for it is written in II Peter 1:3 that our Abba has already placed inside us "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness,*" through knowing Him Who has "*called us to Glory and Virtue.*" (KJV)

I wonder what in this book you found the most helpful. I would welcome your feedback. Please feel free to call me at 856-993-2814 to let me know what you found helpful, or if there is anything that you would change to make this book more useful to you and others.

To enroll in the FREE self-paced, online course on **Coping Strategies** that goes with this book, visit www.HisWordHealsToday.net.

Are you ready to move Beyond Coping? To enroll in the self-paced, online course, **Beyond Coping: Accessing The Mind of Christ**, including 6 audio sessions, go to <https://hiswordhealstoday.net/courses>.

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