



Trauma & Dissociation Bridge of Hope

2017

Note About BoH:

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Already a new year is upon us, and we now have that clean slate that a new year gives us. A new chance to try to make a change that we want to make different. Sometimes the new year isn't starting over but taking something to the next step.

The need is to make sure our goal is reachable and attainable in a timely and capable manner. Being unable to walk, it would be unrealistic for me to set a goal to run a marathon this year. It would however, be realistic for me to work on my upper body strength.

In the past, I've always been excited about having a half-dozen goals to work on. And as usual, I had misplaced, forgotten or already failed them all

within the first month. Can anyone relate to that. That's why this year I have one spiritual goal, and one goal for Hope Recovery. I want to be successful, and I don't want myself or our volunteers to experience the pressure of multiple goals.

Will you consider joining me this new year, 2017, in picking on realistic and doable goal? Feel free to share you goal in our Forum if you want. If you haven't checked it out yet, ten posts give you access to a larger portion of the forum. This allows a bit more privacy for those who are participating versus those visiting. Being a newer forum, it's just starting to get off the ground.

Submitted by:
Kristen

Suggestions for 2017

Start a prayer group or join one.

Write an article or poetry for a newsletter or for a publisher.

Take a course to improve a talent or to tip toe back into school with one course.

Volunteer at a local non-profit that will work with your schedule or special needs.

Attend a seminar, retreat or workshop relate to a topic or craft you are interested in.

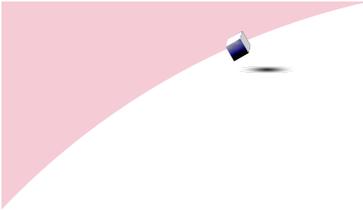
Read a book, or read

your Bible over the course of a year.

Meet some new people, or catch up with some old ones.

Join a support or social group.

If in a place you don't



want to be, get away for a while.

Spend time taking time for you!

Stay calm if you can—remember to breathe.

Be assertive. Learn how to speak your mind so that you win and the one you are speaking to wins.

Pay attention to your body cues—eat or drink

when you're hungry or thirsty.

Keep a mental or written inventory of your life. A success is still a success no matter how small they are.

Whatever you do, find things you like, and begin to enjoy the finer of life. You deserve happiness and love.

Happy New Year!



*Happy
New
Year
2017*

A Common Thread

Somehow you sense it,
Somehow you know
There was a common
Thread between us.
One no one else
Could see
The day you call me
To let me know
You understood,
Things changed forever.
How did you know
We were so alike?
I never thought there
could be someone else

Who starved herself
To rid the pain
Who carved herself
To hide the tears.
How can I thank you
For all you've done?
I cannot be
Grateful enough.
Over the course of
The past few years.
We've seen each
Other struggle
With so many things.
You have always

Been there
To catch me
When I'm about
To fall

Submitted by
Allison B.

Creativity

Do you do anything creative, or have you thought of doing something creative? There are so many options that are creative.

Woodworking, jewelry making, music, singing, sewing, whittling, artwork, poetry, writing short stories or other things. These are just a few ideas of something

that is creative. There are so many more things we can do for creativity. Not only can they be relaxing, but they can be a great distraction on a rough day.

Taking pride in something that is handmade can be so rewarding. Whether we share it or do it for us, it's a great

opportunity to help ourselves. Lately a big deal is coloring books for adults where the lines are finer and can be done with colored pencils or fine tipped markers, or a mixture of both.

Perhaps this is the year to try something new that you haven't tried for you. Will you join in?

Coping with Anxiety

Anxiety is a difficult health issue to deal with. It can feel like one is dying - chest pounding, can't breathe, difficulty thinking, sweating, and/or other symptoms. So what are our options for coping?

Deep Breathing

If we try to focus on our breathing in a anxiety provoking situation, it can help us to refocus and reduce the intensity of the panic attack. Taking a slow breath in through the nose, and a slow breath out through the mouth. Do this a few times slowly and focus on the feeling of your chest filling and emptying. Focus on the process of breathing in and out. Use the counting process to help. In - 1, 2, 3, 4. Hold - 1, 2, 3, 4. Out - 1, 2, 3, 4. Hold - 1, 2, 3, 4. This is box breathing. Try to practice then when you're not having an anxiety attack, so you can be more comfortable doing this.

Thought Stopping

When we feel anxious, we tend to be thinking about anxiety provoking thoughts. "What if x happens?" "What if y doesn't like me?" as well as thinking about the worst case scenario and the fact that it's going to happen, where there is no evidence to show that it's going to happen. I

believe our thoughts are difficult to control sometimes, especially if we allow them to just run through our minds.

So what do we do? Tell ourselves truths. I am afraid x will happen, but I don't know that. It's possible it will turn out well." Fill our minds with scriptures that are comforting, such as [Isai-ah 41:10](#) - So do not fear for I am with you. There is more to that scripture that is wonderful but in a time of anxiety, this might be all we can think of. It's enough.

Facing it together

I think anxiety provoking situations can be better faced with a friend than alone. So if I'm anxious about going into the mall, I can go with my friend, and they can help me by reminding me to breath, by helping me to focus on products rather than my fears, etc. As I become more comfortable in practicing these calming techniques, then I can try them with my friend waiting outside for me. If I need him/her, I can call them and they can come in and help. Then when that is comfortable, continuing to work on it by going by myself, and so on. This can be a helpful process where a good friend who under-

stands what is going on will be a support system.

Journal

Take some time to write out feelings and thoughts after experiencing an anxiety attack. Begin to recognize what the triggers are that create the anxious feeling. Look at the feeling, what happened physically, what thoughts occurred, and think through how that could be changed (if I stopped breathing, I can practice breathing through).

Focus on Now

It's really easy to get distressed and anxious and think about everything except what's going on here and now. Try to be in the moment. To do this, I look around the room I'm in and describe what I see. I pay attention to what I smell. I try to touch things then describe what I feel (texture, temperature, color, etc.). This is being mindful.

Take some time to write out feelings and thoughts after experiencing an anxiety attack.



Are you wanting to go back to work on disability?

Social Security has a document on returning to work or working while on disability. You can check it out at <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10095.pdf>

Vocational Rehabilitation is a program that is available in the states that allows you to apply to see if you can get assistance to train for a new career/job where they will pay for your education, transporta-

tion, tuition or parts of that if you are approved. Testing and assessments are given to those who want to apply for this option.

It's important to report if you work and make any money while on disability. You may work as long as it is not considered substantial, and there is a limit to the amount of money you may make each month. If under 24 months, it is

something they will consider if you are working in a position that you can sustain, showing improvement in your disability. Random reviews will be done after your 24 month period. Even volunteer work can be considered as possible substantial work, depending on how much you volunteer work you do and what you do. It's good to review what your options are if you want to return to work.

I was told that there is nothing wrong with my feelings of anger, it's the behavior that gets me into issues that create problems.

Reaching Out

I'm struggling. I want to isolate, but I know that I need to reach out or I will end up in a worse place than I am in.

It's tough for me to reach out. I'd rather crawl in bed or eat and eat and eat. Thing is, that makes me feel guilty and makes the cycle worse.

Depression and anger

seem to drive me. The depression pushes me away and the anger pushes me forward. But after getting angry I cry and withdrawal again for feeling guilty for getting so angry.

I was told that there is nothing wrong with my feelings of anger, it's the behavior that gets me into issues that create

problems. Thankfully I've been able to control my behaviors, though sometimes my mouth gets the best of me.

I want to learn better skills, and I want to do better at reaching out to others.

Submitted by:
Angel





You are a drop that goes into a pond. Your gift of your drop ripples throughout the pond, and adds to the blessings there. Know that you are worthwhile and you deserve more than you may give yourself credit for.

Without you, there is one less drop into the pond of life, and that leaves a missing part.



Self-Care After Disasters

Disasters affect people who experience and respond to the event. Natural and technological disasters impact survivors, bereaved family members, witnesses to the event, and friends of those involved.

Rescue workers, emergency medical and mental health care providers, and volunteers are also affected. Disasters can also impact members of the media, as well as citizens of the community, the country, and the world. Disasters can cause a number of different stress reactions in those affected. The steps that can be taken for self-care after disasters to manage coping are also useful for those who are witness to a terrorist act.

What can I do?

There are many steps you can take to manage stress after a disaster. You should be aware, though, that healing doesn't mean you'll completely forget the event. You may still feel distress and pain when you think of it. Learn more about Coping with Traumatic Stress Reactions to get better at managing your feelings of distress. You may also have more confidence that you will be able to

cope.

In addition to those strategies, here are other helpful steps you can take after a disaster:

- **Remind yourself that stress reactions after disaster are common.** Know that you're not alone, weak, or "crazy." Most reactions fade with time. If they don't, there are usually free programs set up where you live that you can turn to for help after disasters.#
- **Use problem-solving.** Remember that the long-term stress caused by disasters can reduce your ability to think clearly, be creative, and tackle problems. These problem-solving techniques can help:#
 - o Decide what are your most important problems.#
 - o Get the information and resources you need to deal with your problems.#
 - o Break problems down into small steps so you are not overwhelmed.#
 - o Ask for help from a friend, family member, or counselor to help you brainstorm.#
 - o Stay on track with your plan for dealing with your problems.#
 - o **Spend time with or help others.** Disasters

are unique types of trauma in that most often many people have been affected. Being with family, friends, neighbors, or others may help you realize that you are not the only one affected. Being with others helps rebuild trust in other people. Also, spending time with others gives you a chance to provide support or to help rebuild. Helping other people in need or working in your community can make you feel better about yourself. It can relieve stress to take your mind off your own problems for a while, and maybe you will see them in a different light. Providing support or rebuilding lifts your mood and makes you feel less alone.#

- o **If you are grieving, find a way to honor the losses.** Disasters can create a lot of loss in a person's life. Losses may include loved ones, friends, coworkers, pets, home, possessions, job, or quality of life. Try writing about your loss or creating a ritual, ceremony, or service to express your grief. Such practices can help you feel connected to a lost loved one. Rather than expecting to just "get over it" and move on

Remind yourself that stress reactions after disaster are common.

with your life, it may help to take time to honor and affirm your relationships or values. #

o **Take a broader view.** Make a list of your personal values. Pinpoint those things that the disaster highlighted as most important to you. Use this list to remind yourself of your goals and priorities. It can guide you to live your life in a way that is true to those values. #

o **Practice helpful thinking.** Check out your thoughts. If they are causing you to feel stuck or helpless, try to think of more energizing, helpful thoughts. For example, if you find yourself thinking, "I can't do it," challenge yourself with questions such as: #

o "Is it really true that I can't do it?" #

o "Is it ALWAYS true?" #

o "Under what circumstances could I do it?" #

"Could I do it if I had some help?" #

Then you can put in place a more helpful thought. In this case, you might say to yourself, "With the right help, I can get through this."

• **Take a time out if you're feeling angry.**

The stress that comes along with disasters can create irritability and anger. This can affect your health, sense of self-control, and relationships. Anger can also increase your heart rate so much that you cannot clearly concentrate on the problem you are facing. Take a break to calm down before going into situations that anger you.

This may help you keep a clear head. It may also preserve your health and relationships. #

• **Plan ahead.** If you are afraid of future disasters, you may feel less worried if you learn more about the type of disaster that occurred. Then make up a plan: #

o Learn the warning signs of disaster. #

o Learn what you can expect to happen afterward. #

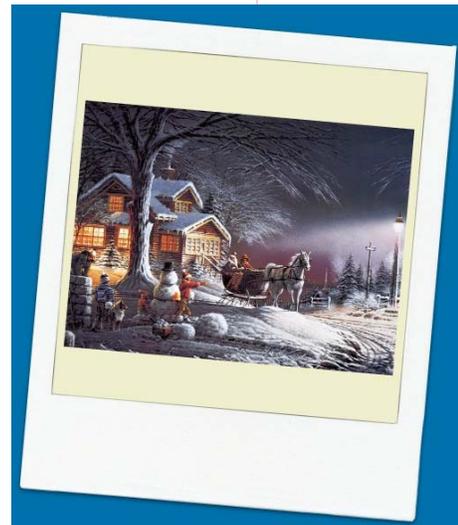
o Become prepared. Create an emergency preparedness kit for your family. #

o Take steps to make your house, job, or school safer. #

o Make and practice a family safety plan. # Have your children help, if they are able, with the preparations.

The National Center for PTSD

Check out your thoughts. If they are causing you to feel stuck or helpless, try to think of more energizing, helpful thoughts.





Just for Fun

C O W C H W 4 M S C F A I T H Y S A C A
 L N O O L A N R U O J O Y Z T X C C C B
 A L U L L A D E S H E L P Z I P H C V S
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 I S V U D I L O S R E P S E I R O M E M
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 S U U R E H A B I L I T A T I O N J E E
 F U M E L G G U C O U N S E L I N G R N

Terms of Recovery

Accountability

Artwork

Clay

Colors

Coping

Counseling

Drawing

Faith

Flashbacks

Forum

Future

Group

Hope

Journal

Memories

Pen

PTSD

Recovery

Rehabilitation

School

Studies

Support

Volunteer

Coping with Traumatic Stress Reactions

When trauma survivors take direct action to cope with their stress reactions, they put themselves in a position of power. Active coping with the trauma makes you begin to feel less helpless.

- Active coping means accepting the impact of trauma on your life and taking direct action to improve things. Active coping occurs even when there is no crisis. Active coping is a way of responding to everyday life. It is a habit that must be made stronger.

Know that recovery is a process

Following exposure to a trauma most people experience stress reactions. Understand that recovering from the trauma is a process and takes time. Knowing this will help you feel more in control.

- Having an ongoing response to the trauma is normal.
- Recovery is an ongoing, daily process. It happens little by little. It is not a matter of being cured all of a sudden.
- Healing doesn't mean forgetting traumatic events. It doesn't mean you will have no pain or bad feelings when thinking about them.
- Healing may mean fewer symptoms and

symptoms that bother you less.

Healing means more confidence that you will be able to cope with your memories and symptoms. You will be better able to manage your feelings.

Positive coping actions

Certain actions can help to reduce your distressing symptoms and make things better. Plus, these actions can result in changes that last into the future. Here are some positive coping methods:

Learn about trauma and PTSD

It is useful for trauma survivors to learn more about common reactions to trauma and about PTSD. Find out what is normal. Find out what the signs are that you may need assistance from others. When you learn that the symptoms of PTSD are common, you realize that you are not alone, weak, or crazy. It helps to know your problems are shared by hundreds of thousands of others. When you seek treatment and begin to understand your response to trauma, you will be better able to cope with the symptoms of PTSD.

Talk to others for support

When survivors talk about their problems with others, something helpful often results. It

is important not to isolate yourself. Instead make efforts to be with others. Of course, you must choose your support people with care. You must also ask them clearly for what you need. With support from others, you may feel less alone and more understood. You may also get concrete help with a problem you have.

Practice relaxation methods

Try some different ways to relax, including:

- Muscle relaxation exercises
- Breathing exercises
- Meditation
- Swimming, stretching, yoga
- Prayer
- Listening to quiet music

Spending time in nature

While relaxation techniques can be helpful, in a few people they can sometimes increase distress at first. This can happen when you focus attention on disturbing physical sensations and you reduce contact with the outside world. Most often, continuing with relaxation in small amounts that you can handle will help reduce negative reactions. You may want to try mixing relaxation in with music, walking, or other activities.

Distract yourself with positive activities

- Pleasant recreation-

Remind yourself that stress reactions after disaster are common.

work activities help distract a person from his or her memories and reactions. For example, art has been a way for many trauma survivors to express their feelings in a positive, creative way. Pleasant activities can improve your mood, limit the harm caused by PTSD, and help you rebuild your life.

Talking to your doctor or a counselor about trauma and PTSD

Part of taking care of yourself means using the helping resources around you. If efforts at coping don't seem to work, you may become fearful or depressed. If your PTSD symptoms don't begin to go away or get worse over time, it is important to reach out and call a counselor who can help turn things around. Your family doctor can also refer you to a specialist who can treat PTSD. [Talk to your doctor](#) about your trauma and your PTSD symptoms. That way, he or she can take care of your health better. Many with PTSD have found treatment with medicines to be helpful for some symptoms. By taking medicines, some survivors of trauma are able to improve their sleep, anxiety, irritability, and anger. It can also reduce urges to drink or use drugs.

Coping with the

symptoms of PTSD

Here are some direct ways to cope with these specific PTSD symptoms:

Unwanted distressing memories, images, or thoughts

- Remind yourself that they are just that, memories.
- Remind yourself that it's natural to have some memories of the trauma (s).
- Talk about them to someone you trust. Remember that, although reminders of trauma can feel overwhelming, they often lessen with time.

Sudden feelings of anxiety or panic

Traumatic stress reactions often include feeling your heart pounding and feeling lightheaded or spacey. This is usually caused by rapid breathing. If this happens, remember that:

- These reactions are not dangerous. If you had them while exercising, they most likely would not worry you.
- These feelings often come with scary thoughts that are not true. For example, you may think, "I'm going to die," "I'm having a heart attack," or "I will lose control." It is the scary thoughts that make these reactions so upsetting.
- Slowing down your

breathing may help.

The sensations will pass soon and then you can go on with what you were doing.

Each time you respond in these positive ways to your anxiety or panic, you will be working toward making it happen less often. Practice will make it easier to cope.

Feeling like the trauma is happening again (flashbacks)

- Keep your eyes open. Look around you and notice where you are.
- Talk to yourself. Remind yourself where you are, what year you're in, and that you are safe. The trauma happened in the past, and you are in the present.
- Get up and move around. Have a drink of water and wash your hands.
- Call someone you trust and tell them what is happening.

• Remind yourself that this is a common response after trauma. Tell your counselor or doctor about the flashback(s).

Dreams and nightmares related to the trauma

- If you wake up from a nightmare in a panic, remind yourself that you are reacting to a dream. Having the dream is why you are in a panic, not because there is real danger now.

al or and orient yourself to the here and now.

- Engage in a pleasant, calming activity. For example, listen to some soothing music.

- Talk to someone if possible.

Talk to your doctor about your nightmares. Certain medicines can be helpful.

Difficulty falling or staying asleep

- Keep to a regular bedtime schedule.
- Avoid heavy exercise for the few hours just before going to bed.
- Avoid using your sleeping area for anything other than sleeping or sex.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine. These harm your ability to sleep.

Do not lie in bed thinking or worrying. Get up and enjoy something soothing or pleasant. Read a calming book, drink a glass of warm milk or herbal tea, or do a quiet hobby.

Irritability, anger, and rage

- Take a time out to cool off or think things over. Walk away from the situation.
- Get in the habit of exercise daily. Exercise reduces body tension and relieves stress.
- Remember that staying angry doesn't work. It actually increases your stress and can

cause health problems.

- Talk to your counselor or doctor about your anger. Take classes in how to manage anger. If you blow up at family members or friends, find time as soon as you can to talk to them about it. Let them know how you feel and what you are doing to cope with your reactions.

Difficulty concentrating or staying focused

- Slow down. Give yourself time to focus on what it is you need to learn or do.
- Write things down. Making "to do" lists may be helpful.
- Break tasks down into small do-able chunks.
- Plan a realistic number of events or tasks for each day.

You may be depressed. Many people who are depressed have trouble concentrating. Again, this is something you can discuss with your counselor, doctor, or someone close to you.

Trouble feeling or expressing positive emotions

- Remember that this is a common reaction to trauma. You are not doing this on purpose. You should not feel guilty for something you do not want to happen and cannot control.
- Make sure to keep taking part in activities that you enjoy or used to

enjoy. Even if you don't think you will enjoy something, once you get into it, you may well start having feelings of pleasure.

Take steps to let your loved ones know that you care. You can express your caring in little ways: write a card, leave a small gift, or phone someone and say hello.

The National Center for PTSD
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/cope/coping-traumatic-stress.asp>



MISSION

The mission of Hope Recovery is to provide Christian-based supportive compassion in the lives of trauma survivors by assisting them in recovery, providing support, resources, committed volunteers, and standards of excellence.

VISION

Hope Recovery aspires to provide excellence in service and support while assisting trauma survivors in achieving their recovery goals.

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Online Christian Support message boards are available at www.christianforums.com

Online Secular Support message boards are available at www.7cups.com/1259571

If you're feeling **suicidal**, please contact 800-SUICIDE or if outside the US, go to www.befrienders.org

If you are being **abused**, experiencing incest or rape, please contact RAINN at 800-656-HOPE. RAINN provides links to international agencies.

If you are in a **violent relationship**, call 800-799-SAFE. For international contacts, go to www.hotpeachpages.net/a/index.html

We're on the Web

www.hope4christianrecovery.org

Subscribing to Bridge of Hope

Fees:

Free to Survivors.

\$4 donations from supporters and professionals is requested to cover the costs of the website..

Donations may be sent to our PO Box, or online via PayPal.

**You Are
Not Alone!**



When all seems like a struggle, there is hope.