

How to Survive in Difficult Times

By Rob McKelvey

Worry a little bit every day and in a lifetime you will lose a couple of years. If something is wrong, fix it if you can. But train yourself not to worry. Worry never fixes anything.... Mary Hemingway

These are interesting and difficult times in which we live. But there have always been interesting and difficult times, and humanity has managed to survive regardless. There have been wars, pestilence, famine, and economic downturns in the past; yet the resilient plasticity of human nature continues to win out. Granted, it may take some time to bounce back, but bounce back we will.

As Mary Hemingway says, “Worry never fixes anything.” So what can we do to stop worrying and survive these times? Take action is the easy answer...but what sort of action. Hopefully some of the suggestions below will help you determine what action is appropriate for you.

Review your goals and objectives. Are your goals and objectives realistic in these difficult times? Can they be accomplished with some of the external restraints being put upon the world at present by the global economy? Should some of the time frames or priorities be changed? Remember, there is no such thing as a bad idea, only bad timing or bad implementation. Is this the right time for some of your goals? Effective goals are those that can be achieved. Can yours be achieved?

Focus on priorities. Once you have reviewed and re-evaluated your goals focus on those that are a priority. It is a universal law that we get what we focus on...both good and bad. Realistically, you can only focus on one or two things at a time. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to do too many things at one time. Figure out those one or two priorities that, if focussed on, would have the biggest positive impact. Make sure your energy is focussed foremost on those goals that are a top priority. Don't get distracted. This may mean that some of the lower priority goals do not get done

Cut back on your expenses. Money is scarce. And cash is still king. It may be useful for you to ask yourself the question “Do I really need to spend this money now?” before an expenditure is made. Expenditure or investment for emotional reasons is foolhardy in these tough financial times. Make sure that an expense is for a need not a want.

Spend time reviewing your activities. Learn from what you have done... what is working and what is not. There is no point in repeating mistakes in the hope that mere activity will accomplish the results that you want to achieve. When problems arise are you spending time on fixing what you can or are you beating your head against a wall trying to fix something that you can't.

Maintain a positive attitude. Easier said than done in some cases; especially with all the doom and gloom being espoused in the media these days. As Monty Python says: “Always look on the bright side of life.” Remember that “fear” can be a positive motivator if you allow it to be. Many successful people were afraid to do something

but they did it anyway. They used their fear as a catalyst and maintained a positive attitude.

Maintain a balance in your life. Spending all your time focussed on resolving the “problems” of these turbulent times can be emotionally numbing. It can be exhausting and energy consuming. It is important to also spend time on your wellbeing. Take a break from work every couple of hours to regroup your energy. It is the same principle as the “Driver Reviver” signs on the highways in Australia. If you don’t take a break every couple of hours your chance of an accident increases. If you work nonstop without a rest your decision making capability may be severely hampered. If you run the batteries down on your phone it won’t work. Keep doing activities that recharge your batteries.

One of the best ways to relieve stress and angst caused by worrisome situations is to smile. Research has proven that when you smile stress levels, as well as blood pressure, are reduced. Studies have also indicated that smiling releases endorphins and serotonin which make us feel good. If you don’t believe me try this little experiment: smile and while smiling think of something negative. Bet you couldn’t either think of something negative while smiling or keep smiling when a negative thought was produced.

So keep smiling.