

No Laughing Matter – Coping Tips for Difficult Times, Chapter 13

From my client, Rachel St. John-Gilbert's book, "Laugh Yourself to Sleep – Nighttime Devotions for the Unconventional Woman" ..

Although this book is titled *Laugh Yourself to Sleep*, there will be many women who will be reading this at a time when they are more apt to cry themselves to sleep. I know this because I receive emails now and then from readers who have found their world turned suddenly, seemingly hopelessly upside down through events such as a marriage crisis, a debilitating personal transition, serious illness, addictive behavior, caring for aging parents and even death.

I am currently navigating a Humpty Dumpty Phase myself. It seems that midlife with young children has a way of cracking me up—and not in the comedic sense of the phrase. So I, a shell of my former fun-loving self, paid a visit to Dallas-based Life Coach, Michele Wahlder. I told her with a quiver in my voice “the word that most describes my feelings is *frustration*—with a capital ‘F’!”

Just in case you or someone close to you is more prone to tears than laughter these days, I asked Michele to share some of her own experience with pain and how she learned to not only cope, but to even thrive at times.

Six years ago, I was riding high on the success of a fulfilling career as a productivity consultant for a large technology firm. I left early one afternoon for a routine mammogram that turned up positive for cancer. Just when I thought things couldn't get worse, the technology industry hit a downturn and two weeks after my diagnosis, I was laid off. I had no family living nearby and my boyfriend became my major caretaker. So far so good, until six months later, when he decided he'd had enough.

Here are Michele's “top tips to coping well” when under duress:

TAKE ACTING LESSONS—The sooner we start acting for ourselves vs. “reacting” to our circumstances, the sooner we'll stop putting our happiness on hold. We may not be able to change our life as it is now, but we can empower ourselves by changing our attitude about it.

FEATHER YOUR FRIENDSHIP NEST—With a strong base of love, encouragement and helping hands, most of us can make it through anything. During a time of crisis it's okay to set aside your ability to give (or give much) and begin exercising your ability to receive.

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE—Begin looking for people, places, or things to be grateful for throughout the day. It will redirect your mind and heart towards what is

positive in your life. Consider creating a gratitude journal so you can visually count your blessings.

TRY “SLOW-MO” Begin quieting your mind and soul for at least 5 minutes each day, building up to more. Become an “observer of your experience,” allowing whatever feelings and thoughts you have to emerge without immediately judging them.

ACCEPT, DON’T REGRET Acceptance is not denying our pain, but rather choosing to look at the reality of our situation, as it is now, rather than how we think it “should be”. Accepting yourself, your current situation, and your feelings about it all is the portal to peace.

DON’T BE AN EMOTIONAL LONE RANGER Share your feelings and thoughts with a supportive person who is a good listener. Other emotional outlets could include: journaling, dancing, listening to music, experimenting with different art media.

BECOME A “HAPPY HEADCASE”

Become aware of your “self talk”

- 1) Write down any negative thoughts you are saying to yourself
- 2) Write down a phrase that affirms the opposite of your negative thought. (Some people find it helpful to think of what their best friend would say to them)
- 3) Repeat the affirmations every morning upon waking or every evening prior to sleep, when the subconscious is most receptive to new messages.

GET MOVING! Even 10 minutes of exercise a day will increase endorphins and lift spirits.

HELP IS ONLY A PRAYER AWAY When things look bleak, miracles are possible if we surrender our situation to God. One of the most powerful prayers we can pray when we feel stuck is, “I’m willing to see this differently.” Just being *open* to redirecting your thinking is a great place to start.

“Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way, say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come. He will come to save you.’”
Isaiah 35: 3, 4