



*GFSC provides mentoring methods and materials
to strengthen community resilience
in times of crisis and change.*

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

By Gilbert Brenson Lazan

To the people of Haiti and all those who care for/about them:

You and many other good people are suffering the inevitable and painful consequences of this tragedy in Haiti. Nothing and no one can take away the pain and anxiety that so many people are suffering. Even in the midst of this disaster, it is important to keep in mind these eight facts:

FACT # 1: YOU HAVE SUFFERED A TERRIBLE LOSS: You may not believe or want to believe that this is happening. Perhaps you think it is a nightmare from which you'll wake up tomorrow, or that someone is going to move a magic wand and fix everything.

Unfortunately this has happened and will not go away. Whatever the future of the country, what remains is the pain of loss of loved ones, neighborhood, a home, a job, a dream, a lifestyle, co-workers and many other things. You are experiencing an extraordinary and totally unfair loss and is important to recognize that it generates difficult reactions in your mind and your body...and that these reactions are normal.

FACT # 2: THE LOSS IS UNFAIR: Even more painful for many is the injustice at the personal and national level. The country does not deserve this! It has been assailed by circumstances entirely beyond your control. Every day bad things happen to good people. People are suffering an injustice. Life is not always fair but still, you are alive.

FACT # 3: THE LOSS IS PAINFUL: Any loss hurts and hurts a lot! Feeling the pain of loss is normal, natural and necessary. It is useless and dangerous to ignore these feelings or try to cover them up. Your pain is proof that you are alive; a sign that you are able to react to life experiences. Your sadness, fear, anger, frustration, feelings of guilt and uncertainty are all part of the pain. For now, just recognize that they exist and give yourself permission to feel them without blaming yourself or others. Do not deny their existence, cover them up or flee from them. The pain is important because it is the beginning of your grief. There is a beginning, a middle and an end to all mourning. You have already begun and there will be an end. The dawn will come.

FACT # 4: NOW YOU HAVE LESS, BUT ARE NOT A LESS VALUABLE PERSON: Right now it may be difficult to remember how valuable you are. Your self esteem may have suffered a blow and you may be doubting yourself as a person. These are just indications that you are alive in this very moment. Although these thoughts and feelings are normal, they have nothing to do with your value as a person. You are much, much more than the loss you are suffering. You are as valuable a human being as you were before and you will be even more valuable for having overcome this tragedy.

FACT # 5: THOSE INTENSE FEELINGS ARE NORMAL: All those intense feelings of are completely normal. It would be abnormal and dangerous not to feel them. Feelings are not bad or good in themselves...just the behaviors they may generate.

- The **sadness** you feel accompanies any loss. It is best to feel and talk about it with people you are close to (relatives or very dear friends). You do not have to pretend that you are so strong or that this loss is not important—unless you're a hippopotamus!
- The **anger** you feel is also normal and natural. It is a mechanism that prepares the body and mind to face a challenge. You have every right to feel your anger with everyone and everything. Covering up your anger or turning it inward would be very harmful to your physical and mental health.
- Your **fear** is also natural, normal and necessary to prepare you to continue safely. Right now, your future is uncertain. Fear alerts us to certain dangers that may exist and that we can avoid.
- A feeling of **guilt** also accompanies almost any loss. Sometimes you think that things would have been different if you had done something different. The "woulda-coulda-shoulda syndrome is a cruel hoax because no one can change the past, just learn from it. Talk to someone you respect about this and your other feelings and help others to do so.

FACT # 6: YOU NEED TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF: Your body, your emotions and your relationships are especially susceptible during a crisis like this. Therefore, it is very important do what is possible to maintain good nutrition, get plenty of exercise, time with your loved ones, adequate sleep each night and, above all, resist the strong temptation to "drown your sorrows" with alcohol or with other drugs.

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

FACT # 7: YOU CAN TURN THE PAIN INTO OPPORTUNITY: This is the Chinese symbol that means "crisis." It is a combination of two symbols: the top means "mortal danger" and the bottom means "unique opportunity."

The **danger** is in reacting inappropriately to the crisis and the **opportunity** is to learn from the crisis and begin this new phase of your life with effective strategies to help you cope. A common denominator among all great men and women in history has been their resilience, the ability to face a tragedy or an obstacle and come out of it stronger and wiser. You can take advantage of this opportunity to grow physically, mentally, socially, professionally and spiritually.



FACT # 8: YOUR RESOURCES AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT: Crisis and loss are part of life, part of being alive, part of being and of human feeling. Your task is to begin this journey called "mourning" for the loss you have suffered and move forward to your inevitable recovery and subsequent success. To achieve this, you have four significant resources and sources of support:

- Your most important resource is **yourself**: your many personal qualities, your many past experiences of overcoming some difficulty, your wisdom and maturity. You know who you are and what you can achieve. You are the only legitimate architect of your own destiny, even though, at this time, you can hardly believe it.
- Another important resource is your **faith** in God and in life. Life always takes its course and always offers alternatives.
- A very important source of support is your **family** and **friends**. It is important that you allow them to comfort you and that you ask them for support when you need it.
- Finally, you have the support of many people around the world and many resources to help you get through this a better and stronger person..

"Everything can be taken away from a person, except one thing: the freedom to choose an attitude in any given situation".

Man's Search for Meaning, Dr. Viktor Frankl

Global Facilitator Service Corps provides mentoring, methods and materials to strengthen community resilience in times of crisis and change. The following manuals are available in the GFSC Library online. These manuals and other materials are free downloads for individuals and communities who need them.

- To help Children
...And Now What? A HELPING HAND FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE SUFFERED A LOSS
[\[http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/And%20Now%20What_sep06_r1.pdf\]](http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/And%20Now%20What_sep06_r1.pdf)
- To help Adults
A Light In This Dark Valley: A GUIDE FOR EMOTIONAL RECOVERY: Fifty Things that You Can Do When There Is Nothing Else To Do
[\[http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/LightValley_sep06_r1.pdf\]](http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/LightValley_sep06_r1.pdf)
- To help Facilitators, Group and Community Leaders
FACILITATING PSYCHOSOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION: A Manual for Crisis and Disaster Intervention
[\[http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/FacPsyRecon_sep06_r1.pdf\]](http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/FacPsyRecon_sep06_r1.pdf)
- **Working With Groups After A Crisis Suggestions for Sharing, Processing, Learning**
[\[http://gfsc_web/VirtLib/working_with_groups_under_stress_eng.pdf\]](http://gfsc_web/VirtLib/working_with_groups_under_stress_eng.pdf)

