Talk About Living!
Suzanne Zoglio, PhD

The art of bouncing back

Just as life seems to be going great, you get hit with an unexpected blow. Your car breaks down and the bill depletes your vacation fund. You go for a routine dental exam and find you need a root canal. A work colleague announces he just got a great promotion …the one you thought was yours. Life is full of bumps in the road. Some are larger than others, but they're all destabilizing.

So how do you bounce back from financial setbacks, health concerns, and life's disappointments? Moving on is often easier said than done, but three techniques can make you more resilient: venting, going to the balcony, and solution sleuthing.

Since none of us likes to be seen as a whiner, you might be tempted to just bury your feelings. While putting on a brave front is appropriate at times, it won't help your rebound. Putting on a happy face when you're churning inside is like spraying lilac deodorizer in a smoke-soaked room. You don't get rid of the stench; you just end up with a *different* stench. Instead, it's far more productive to stir things up and air your feelings with a trusted friend. Expressing your anger or sadness allows you to process your feelings and be comforted. As you do, some weight is lifted and the numbness or pain will likely lessen. The loss is still there, but a caring ear reminds you that you're not alone.

Gaining perspective is also important. To do so, try "going to the balcony." Using a wide-angled lens, consider what crises you've survived in the past. You might even rate the current challenge compared with past disappointments. Studies have shown that rating a stressful situation reduces our stress response to the event. Adopting a bird's eye view may also help you to see any good in the event. Perhaps the break down happened close to home. Or now you know your boss wants something different from you. From the balcony, you'll get perspective on the severity of a stressful event, your capacity to survive, and on any blessing hiding in the disaster.

Once you've vented and broadened your perspective, you might try what I call "solution sleuthing." You solution sleuth by turning complaints into questions.

For instance, when you catch yourself thinking "My vacation just went down the drain with that car repair," try turning the complaint into a question: "Where can I go on half the money?" or "How can I replace my vacation money by June?" Complaints drain the brain. If repeated often they can make us feel powerless, stressed, and even depressed. Questions, on the other hand, beg to be answered. They are energizing, motivating, and spur us on in a new direction.

Suppose the next time life presents you with an unexpected blow, you confide in a friend, gain a broader perspective, and create a new path forward. You not only bounce back, but come back even stronger than you were before. Talk about living!

Suzanne Zoglio, PhD is the author of *Create a Life that Tickles Your Soul* and *Recharge in Minutes.* www.zoglio.com