

Let's be honest: sometimes life hits hard—and keeps hitting.


The diagnosis. The death. The betrayal. The unraveling of everything you thought was solid.


When you're in the thick of it, even the smallest tasks feel impossible. Making dinner? Forget it. Returning a text? Too much. You're in survival mode, and survival mode isn't pretty. It's primal. It's raw. And it's real.

This post isn't going to pretend that hard times can be fixed with a bubble bath or a gratitude journal. (Though we'll get to gratitude later.) This is about what *actually helps* when you're moving through the fire.

1. Name It Without Judging It


Psychologist Dan Siegel calls it "*name it to tame it*." When you can label what you're feeling—grief, rage, numbness, overwhelm—it activates the prefrontal cortex and helps you regain a sense of control.


 **The science:** Brain scans show that labeling emotions reduces activity in the amygdala (the brain's alarm system) and increases activity in the frontal lobes, which are responsible for decision-making and self-regulation.

 **Try this:** Pause. Say it out loud or write it down: “*I feel anxious and exhausted. I’m scared. I’m angry this is happening.*” Naming it helps you hold it, instead of it holding you.

2. Create Micro-Moments of Stability


When everything feels out of control, *control something small.*


 **The science:** Routines signal safety to your nervous system. Even small rituals—like making your bed or drinking your tea the same way each morning—can lower cortisol levels and calm your body’s fight-or-flight response.

 **Try this:** Pick *one* thing to do the same way every day. Maybe it’s washing your face at night, going for a 5-minute walk, or lighting a candle when you start your day. That tiny anchor can keep you from drifting too far.

3. Let Others In—Even If It's Messy

You don’t have to be cheerful. You don’t have to be eloquent. You just have to let someone know you’re struggling. Ask for help, or at the very least, don’t pretend you’re fine when you’re not.


 **The science:** Social support not only improves mental health—it literally strengthens your immune system and lowers your risk of dying from all causes. We are wired to heal in connection, not isolation.


 **Try this:** Text a friend: *“I’m going through something rough. I don’t need advice—just someone to know.”* That’s enough.

4. Stop Negotiating with Reality

There’s a moment we all hit in grief, trauma, or heartbreak where we keep thinking, *“This isn’t fair. This isn’t how it was supposed to be.”*


You're right. But it's also real.


 **The mindset shift:** Psychologist Tara Brach calls this *radical acceptance*—facing the moment as it is, without resistance, blame, or bargaining. It's not giving up. It's *giving in*—to what is, so you can move forward.

 **Try this:** Say to yourself, “This is what’s happening. I don’t like it. But it’s here. And I can be with it.” Over time, that softens the suffering.

5. Let Meaning Rise From the Rubble

This one takes time—but eventually, you may find yourself asking, “*What is this pain trying to teach me?*”

 **The science:** Research on post-traumatic growth shows that while trauma can break us, it can also *rebuild* us stronger, more purposeful, more connected to what matters.

 **Try this:** Don’t force meaning. But be open to it. When the time is right, ask: “*What now?*” or “*Who am I becoming because of this?*” You don’t need the full answer. Just the next clue.

Final Thought: This is Temporary (Even When It Feels Endless)

It may not be fast. It may not be fair. But what you’re feeling right now is not forever.

You have done hard things before. You will do this one, too.

And one day—maybe sooner than you think—you will reach for someone else’s hand in the dark and say, “*I’ve been there. Let me walk you through.*”

That’s how we keep going. That’s how we heal.