

# CHANGES MODULE 1:

## Changing how you feel

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When we are unwell, the first step is to admit you have a problem. You have already done this by coming here. But what else do you need to help you cope through this period of mental distress and **change** how you feel?

Expert survivalists have identified three things needed for surviving tough situations: **hope, a plan and effort**. They're connected. So when one of them is missing, coping becomes really challenging.

With **hope** we can begin to form a **plan**, and with a plan, any **effort** we put in is more likely to move us towards our goals and give us yet more hope. It's a positive cycle.

### **So how do we build hope when in mental distress?**

A loss of hope can often be caused by feeling powerless, feeling that we have no control. By recognising what we *can* do to **change** the situation we are in, we can start to gain a **feeling of control** and hope can develop from there.

Here are a few tips for surviving and moving towards change:

1. Remember there is no 'survival gene' that some people have that others don't. We all have something to bring to the group.
2. The best piece of kit for survival is a well-stocked brain. You already have this. Try to remember that feelings may not be facts.
3. Expect the unexpected. Most of us will be stunned by a life-changing event when we have no frame of reference to understand it. That reaction is natural, but being able to react positively is still possible after a little pause.
4. Recognise the motivation that you *do* have at the moment. You came here to this group today. You are able to put in effort which makes you strong.
5. Make *small* goals that can give you a sense of achievement and work towards the change you need.

A SMART goal is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (you can complete it within a short time-frame).

6. Remember that being fearful is a natural human emotion when facing uncertainty, pain, danger and difficulty. Courage is your ability to face these things head-on.

Surviving tough situations often comes down to the ability to put in effort even when you are uncomfortable, and accepting the temporary hardship on the way to finding new hope.

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### **Discussion Options**

What gives you hope?

What other tips do you have for surviving tough situations?

### **Further Resources**

- *How to Survive* by John Hudson (The UK Military's Chief Survival Instructor) - ideas from this module are adapted from this fascinating book
- *The Stranger on the Bridge* (2015). Documentary Film.