



The Grind – Part 14 - Trouble Ahead: Creating an Emotional Self Care Plan

VIDEO LINK - <https://youtu.be/iKwe-EFtSyU>

When managing the grind in our lives, we may find ourselves to be like a lookout on a ship out at sea. The lookout can see the weather and the waves of a storm ahead and sound the alarm that there is “trouble ahead” as rough seas are approaching. Then rest of the crew on the ship does not respond impulsively, rather they know exactly how to react. That is because there is a pre-established plan in place for rough seas and other troubles. The crew then works together to follow the plan to safely and effectively navigate the storm until it is over.

The same could be true for our own lives. Like the lookout on the ship, we may see signs ahead that a “storm” is approaching. We could be experiencing work problems, financial problems, health problems, family problems or any other situation that may require some grit, resilience and extra effort to get through. Like the crew on the ship facing rough seas ahead, we do not want to react impulsively to our own troubles. It is better to have a plan in place.

One aspect for planning to manage difficult times is to have an “Emotional Self Care Plan” in place. The purpose of this ESCP (aka “Escape Plan”) is to be prepared for the inevitable mental and emotional challenges that will occur during times of troubles. We all know it can be very difficult to manage emotionally with the added stress of a sudden problematic situation in life.

Key aspects of an ESCP includes a list of Do's and Don'ts

Do – Establish some form of regular **physical activity** (biking, exercising, jogging, weights, etc.)

Don't – Live a stagnant, movement free life which can only keep you in a rut

- What is your plan for regular physical activity (to the degree you are able)?

Do – Come up with a system for **relaxation**. More than one method is a good idea (for example, breathing, reading, stretching, walking, sports, etc.) – Have some healthy distractions prepared (Hobbies, entertainment, etc.)

Don't stay in a state of constant stress, thinking you can solve your problems by going full speed every waking minute. Down time is essential especially when times are tough. Don't fall into a pattern of unhealthy escapes like alcohol use, gambling, spending or other negative ways to self-medicate

- What is your plan for relaxation and what are your healthy ways to get your mind off of things?

Do – Use your **support system**. Make sure you are in regular contact with people who can help refresh you and encourage you

Don't isolate thinking you can do everything on your own and don't do the opposite by telling everyone who will listen all of your problems. Use your supports who you can trust

- What is your plan for using your support system?



Do – **Look at the big picture.** Think of the long game. Stay focused on your goals and your purpose. Consider your values and morals. Even if things are tough now, hold on to your positive vision for the future. Focus on what you have control over and leave the rest

Don't let short-sightedness lead you into a hasty decision you will regret or a risky quick fix that may make things worse in the long run. Don't give up just because things are tough for now. Don't compromise your values and what's most important to you. Don't waste time trying to control what you have no control over

- What are your long-term goals and what is your positive vision for the future once you are through this tough time?

Do have a set of “go to” **day to day coping skills** for when you feel discouraged or are otherwise struggling. Have some positive self-statements you can say to yourself to remind yourself to keep pressing forward (Positive self-talk)

Don't wait for a crisis to happen to then all of a sudden need a plan. Have a plan in place before a crisis happens to remain strong and resilient when you need it most

- What coping skills work for you? (You can use some of the other ones mentioned already)

Do – **Know your emotional triggers.** Know what types of situations can trigger negative thoughts and mood states (like a bad day at work, or arguing with family, etc.) Have a plan for your triggers to rebound from them by using your coping skills and supports

Don't wait until you are triggered to react impulsively and do something you may later regret. Don't let triggers put you into a negative tailspin.

- What are some of your emotional triggers and what can you do when you feel triggered in a negative way?

Do **be patient with yourself.** Remember that negative thinking only makes things worse so as difficult as it can be when things are tough, practice staying positive and grateful for what you have. Pay attention to even the small gains and the baby steps forward because they all add up to eventual success if you keep moving forward.

Don't let discouragement get you down especially by beating yourself down with negative thinking. Life is tough but if you stay focused and positive, you'll get through.

- What can you tell yourself to stay patient, positive and focused and to drown out negative and discouraging thoughts. Again, using supports who can you turn to for encouragement when you need it most?

YOU WILL GET THROUGH THIS...YOU ARE STRONGER THAN YOU THINK