



FIRST AID FOR LIFE'S CHALLENGES

Neal A. Maxwell's book "All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience", pg. 29-31 pretty much sums up the reasons why we have challenges. He lists them as:

1. Our own sins and mistakes (2 Samuel 11:2)
2. Part of daily living (Matthew 5:45) I think of Hurricane Katrina where bad things happened to good and bad people.
3. Trials God uses to refine us (Job 23:10)

Pres. James E. Faust said, "If there were no night, we would not appreciate the day, nor could we see the stars and the vastness of the heavens. We must partake of the bitter with the sweet. There is a divine purpose in the adversities we encounter every day. They prepare, they purge, they purify, and thus they bless. ("Refined in our Trials", *Ensign*, Feb. 206)

I will always remember a R.S. lesson where every sister was given a piece of paper and told to write a challenge she was facing in life at the time. The papers were all collected and the teacher proceeded to read all of the slips of paper. One had an unfaithful husband, one had a suicidal child, depression, aging parents to care for, etc. It was very humbling to hear all of the problems in that one room. I was shocked and surprised. All of these sisters seemed to "have it all together", I never would have known. My problem was no small thing. I have a child with learning disabilities, emotional and mental problems but after hearing all of the different challenges those women were facing I wouldn't have traded them for anything. We all face challenges in our life at one time or another if not how are we to grow and develop.

I have a son who has learning disabilities and numerous emotional and mental illnesses. The most pronounced ones are ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). These have proven to be a great challenge for him and for us his family as well. We've learned a lot through hard knocks and are still learning. These are some steps that I've learned to help me face my challenges and to help him face his challenges. They are not in a particular order and some may apply to your challenges and some may not. Hopefully they will help.

- Acknowledge the challenge - I've found with most of my trials that I'm very slow to acknowledge that I have a problem. That is the first step and you can take action once you've accepted the facts. With our son we knew something was wrong for a long time but kept hoping it would go away and tried to ignore it. Until we finally acknowledge our problem we can't move forward.
- Diligently seek help - There are a lot of challenges that can be remedied or at least helped if the right help are sought after. When it's physical seek a doctor, when it's emotional seek a counselor, when its spiritual turn to the Lord or his servant, the bishop. There is a lot of help out there if we will look for it. I've included a list of web sites to turn to for many helps. I was very surprised to find many wonderful articles that I've learned much from on the www.lds.org site under provident living. From parenting tips to eating disorders and many more. Once we went to the dr. for our son and after much testing we had his diagnosis and then had a direction to go to get some help with therapy, medication, school, etc.
- Support network - Turn to family and friends, let them help you. Even if you don't want them to know your challenge let them know you need a little support at this time in your life. Call them up and say, "I really need a Diet Coke and company right now to help me forget life. Will you go with me?" When our family members found out the diagnosis for our son they were very supportive, extended compassion for him and for us, were a lot more patient and helpful with him. That eased our load greatly.
- Repentance - Not all of our challenges need our repentance, but a humble heart and turning to our Father makes us more teachable and receptive to the Spirit. And for those challenges that need repentance

although it may seem hard, go through the steps and, if needed, go to the bishop, he is there to help and heal. Some challenges we may try doing everything except repent when repentance is the only way we will truly feel free from the challenge pressing down on us.

- Find joy in everyday life – Counting your blessings often helps us forget our problems and trials. Try to find happiness in daily small things, look for that happiness. Harold B. Lee said, “Happiness does not depend on what happens outside of you but on what happens inside of you. It is measured by the spirit with which you meet the problems of life.”
- Exercise, sleep & eating – When our bodies are going through challenges we become stressed and don’t take care of our bodies as well as we should. When we are facing difficult things is when we *need* to get enough sleep, exercise and eat right to be able to be strong to meet and overcome our challenges easier. If I’m lacking on sleep, exercise or food I seem to have no patience or spiritual guidance, I’m cross and short with everyone. We must take care of our physical bodies!
- Give service – Often it helps us get outside of our problems and ourselves if we give of ourselves to others through service. It helps us remember that we are all here together to help each other out as brothers and sisters. I’ve found as I am helping my son and serving him my problems drop into the background and don’t seem quite as hard to deal with.
- Priesthood blessings & temple attendance – So much peace and comfort can come to you if you take the opportunities to use these wonderful gifts. Both priesthood blessings and temple attendance have been a great boost for me like a shot of adrenaline in my arm to continue on and do a better job.
- Fasting & scripture study – I know it seems like one more thing to do but if done in the right spirit they can give you an extra armor of protection and open your mind to inspiration to help you with your challenges. To me they often seem like they clear my mind to be more receptive to the Spirit when I do them.
- Forgive yourself & others – This is often one of the hardest things to do. If your Father in Heaven can forgive you why can’t you forgive yourself? If forgiveness is part of your challenge it will never truly be behind you until you forgive yourself and others.
- Learn more, educate yourself – When my son was diagnosed with all of his problems I read everything I could find and learned all I could. We’ve taken classes as parents and as a family to know how best to help our son. We’ve also been able to use that education to help him understand his own challenges. I felt I could handle the challenge better if I understood medically what was involved and what to expect. If you understand the problem better usually you can find a way to get through it better, not faster, but better.
- Strengthen your self-image – Try to learn or do something new and different. Try to broaden your horizons. Make a list of all of your positive points. At times when we have challenges in our lives our self-image often drops as well.
- Evaluate/make adjustments/be accountable – While going through our challenges rarely do we stop and evaluate if what we are doing is working or not or different approaches to make. Be accountable to yourself, ask yourself if you are doing what you should. We have tried endless techniques, therapies, behavior modifications for our son. When something didn’t work we’d go back and try something different until we found something that would work. In this life he won’t be healed of these challenges but hopefully he’ll be able to handle them in his own way and adapt so that life is still good for him.
- Rely on the Lord & Prayer – This should probably be between each of these steps listed again and again. For me this is probably THE most helpful of all the steps. If I take the Savior’s atonement and let it work for me I can turn my burdens over to Him. Nothing has given me as much comfort in my trials as prayer has. Elder Richard G. Scott said, “No matter what the source of difficulty and no matter how you begin to obtain relief-though a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one-no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments.” (To Be Healed” *Ensign*, may 1994, 9.)