



## On the road to ... Coping with Crisis

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If we are in a dangerous situation, or it is not safe to keep living where we are living, we may have to get out. Leaving, and protecting ourselves and any children we are in charge of, might be the only choice. But if and when we have to leave certain people and places behind, it becomes extra important not to leave ourselves behind, too.

When we are in crisis, we often tend to do that. We panic, go on autopilot, go into survival mode. Like, instead of walking by our own side, we run away and freak out, giving all our attention to the situation and none to how we are really doing inside of it, or we completely space out. We might go through the motions of trying to fix the problem the same way we always have, doing what we did every time this crisis repeated, whether it worked or not. All ways of leaving our own selves.

This time, try to STAY with yourself and notice.

**S – Situation** - this one. It is what it is. Stay with it - try to be real about it with yourself. It sucks, and it will probably take lots of time and work and hard decisions to get out of. You don't have to make all the decisions right now. Breathe. If your situation is literally unsafe, you first have to get yourself (and any children you care for) to a safe place. If you can, try to connect with people who can support your safety, your feelings - people who will listen. Breathe again.

**T – Transition** (means a time of change). It will not be like this forever. So don't burn your bridges. If you are in a school program, and need to take a break don't just disappear, but make arrangements that will make it easier for you to come back when you are ready. If you are working a job, don't just disappear, try to explain that you need time, or you need to quit (so they can be a reference when you are ready to work again). And you will be ready someday: T also stands for time. This will pass.

**A – Ask yourself** what you need right now - what you really need. For example, maybe you think you need to quit school. Check in with yourself without judgment: do you really have to go? Give yourself permission to do that if you need to. But is there another option, something creative, a middle way? Or maybe you always make yourself finish everything you start. Then ask yourself if you really need to finish this course, this year. Maybe not, maybe yes. Sometimes school is a safe place that grounds us, and we need those connections. Is it for you right now? Really?

**Y – You.** You are the only one who will be with you for the rest of your life. You are the only one who has been around for your whole life so far. Try to stay with yourself, and try to let go of shame. Other people's violence is never ever your fault. You are doing the best you can as the person you are, and you're going to do what you need to do: but do it on purpose now. Don't cut and run. Look in the mirror and say, **STAY WITH ME.** My friend. I am here for you.