

President Theodore Roosevelt believed that unbridled capitalism leads to corruption. The economic malaise which we are all experiencing at this time is a strong testament to the validity of his prescient remark.

John Podesta, co-chair of President-Elect Obama's transition committee, stated that the U.S. has lost over one million jobs this year. The U.S. Labor Department reported that we lost 240,000 jobs in October. Putting that data into perspective, the entire U.S. auto industry employs 250,000 people.

We are embroiled in a potentially severe recession that could last for some time. Fallout from the housing, credit and stock market turmoil continues to accumulate and analysts forecast that the jobless rate will continue to climb.

There is cause for hope; our newly elected leaders will bring fresh ideas and different strategies to the resolution of our economic difficulties. A broader stimulus package will be implemented. New safeguards will be put in place.

In the meantime, surviving tough times will take careful research, thought and planning. The time-honored technique for crisis management, whatever its nature, involves a one-step-at-a-time, a one-day-at-a-time approach:

**First, keep your emotions under control:**

- Events change rapidly in a period of crisis; resolve to act, not react.
- False pride can be deadly: choose to be practical instead.
- Avoid “awful-i-zing,” futile ruminating about how grim things look.

**Next, evaluate carefully:**

- Get facts; feelings are not facts; become a clear-eyed realist.
- Keep family involved in identifying options and in setting priorities.
- Set a general direction for the future and reevaluate frequently; keep a number of different options under consideration at all times.
- Consider what you will do under a “worst possible case” scenario.

**Finally, take action:**

- Eat nutritious food, exercise daily, get enough sleep and limit alcohol.
- Get legal advice; understand your rights as an employee, an employer and as a debtor; calmly negotiate your best exit or repayment deals.
- Avoid the “paralysis of analysis;” remain alert, involved and in movement. Do something constructive about your situation every day.
- Shore up your support network; review options with trusted people. Reach out to others; helping others will serve to reduce your anxiety.
- Be flexible; do not adhere rigidly to your most desired outcome.
- Set preliminary, intermediate and final dates for decision-making. Make tough decisions when they need to be made; let go with dignity.

**Keep in mind:**

- Harness the power of positive thinking; apply the “as if” principle. That is, choose to think and behave “as if” things will all work out.
- There is very little in life that is all bad; there are always good things happening. Form a habit of noticing, appreciating and enjoying them.
- There is often great opportunity in adversity. Look for ways to transcend current difficulties, ways in which to grow and to change.

Most of the major mental health lessons in life have come to us from the world’s great religious traditions and time-honored belief systems.

A Quaker friend taught me long ago that everything you need is always there all the time. If you choose to believe this, she said, you need not despair; you will choose to look for what you need and you will find it.

She clarified: you will find what you need, not necessarily what you want. Over time, I have found this hypothesis to prove unfailingly true.