

Managing Setbacks

We all face setbacks in our lives. This fact can't be avoided. Whether it's a family separation, death of a loved one, an unexpected deployment, financial strain, job loss, an accident, or even a simple mistake, setbacks take their toll on us. However, with each setback there is opportunity. Finding it and taking advantage of it can often build character and bring growth. It is how you manage the setback that matters most.

There are three broad ways that people often deal with setbacks. Problem-focused coping, Emotion-focused coping, and Avoidance coping.

- **Problem-focused Coping:** Involves attempts to resolve the setback by taking necessary steps to remove the conflict. People who follow this strategy take the time to fully understand the setback, learn from it, and prevent it from happening again. They understand that they often need social support and other self-care strategies, and believe that they will get through the setback no matter what it is.
- **Emotion-focused Coping:** Occurs when emotions are appropriately expressed as a way to seek a new perspective about the setback. People that manage setback using Emotion-focused coping often rely on others for emotional support allowing them to talk through their experiences to obtain a greater meaning. It often can lead the Emotionally-focused coper to gain objectivity, find new insights, and put needed focus on what is truly important in life.
- **Avoidance Coping:** Avoiding the setback altogether may be one of the most common approaches. This happens when an individual doesn't directly address the setback or deal with the emotions that it creates. Avoidance copers often turn to distractions to escape.

Research shows that people that have a Problem-focused or Emotion-focused coping style often do better when faced with a setback. That said, Avoidance coping for periodic, short time periods can have some benefits, as well. When a setback hits, it is important to take the time to choose which style of coping is right for you. This often depends on your needs at the moment and the setback you're facing.

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