SURVIVE and THRIVE
How to Navigate through the Transitions of Life and Keep Trying when You Feel like Giving-Up

"There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning." ~ Western Novelist Louis L’Amour

"While some hesitate because they feel inferior, others are busy making mistakes and becoming superior." ~ Henry C. Link

"Do what you can where you are with what you’ve got." ~ Theodore Roosevelt

"Once we accept our limits, we go beyond them." ~ Albert Einstein

"Our strength grows out of our weaknesses." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

"A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances, but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes." ~ Hugh Downs

"You will experience times in your life when it feels impossible to laugh. But once you do, something magical happens. You feel a glimmer of hope. You believe you’ll figure things out and know you will be okay." ~ Lois McElravy

"When life knocks you down, humor is the magic wand that cushions your fall, lifts you back up, and points you in a new direction." ~ Lois McElravy

by Lois McElravy

Things are not as they first appear . . .

Secret Weapon Stress Buster Strategies

- Smile – Giggle, chuckle, laugh – Wave your magic wand
- Step back, distance yourself, look at your situation from a different angle
- Call on your sense of humor – Look for the funny and appreciate the amusing
- Quiet time – Deep breathing, stretching, meditation, yoga
- Postpone worrying or dealing with your situation until later by setting an appointed date/time to come back to “deal” with it rationally
- Ask for assistance – Use your network
- Petition your Angels - Make a wish list
- Q-T-I-P – Quit Taking It Personal
- Distract yourself – Get busy, work on projects
- Do something fun – movies, music, reading, hobbies, bird watching, art
- Learn creative arts – drama, voice lessons, dancing lessons, learn to play a musical instrument
- Physical activity – exercise, walk, play sports, dance, sing,
- Relax – rest, take a nap, bubble bath, massage
- Random acts of kindness – Do something thoughtful for someone else
- Switch gears – utilize pacing strategies – to avoid getting stuck or drained, rotate between thinking activities and routine tasks
- Spirituality – pray or count your blessings
- Comfort of a friend – choose someone who’s been there, or spend time with a pet
- Treat yourself – favorite food or beverage
- Create a memory bank of special moments and reflect on times when you were happiest, bravest, strongest or most successful
- Visualize what you want to do or be, see yourself accomplishing this and allow yourself to feel how you will feel when you succeed
- Play hooky from the world for 20 minutes (shut off your cell phone)
- Journal – write down your thoughts and feelings to clear your head
- Take a time-out from your life – pretend you are the happiest you could ever be for a pre-set amount of time; one hour, entire afternoon, full day
- Tantrum – scream and shout for 10 minutes – in private – without doing harm to yourself or another; when done, set a positive intention
- Pity Party – privately whine, complain and feel sorry for yourself for 10 minutes, when done, look for something positive, and acknowledge it
- Carry a marble with you. On those days when you feel like you have lost all of your marbles, look at it and say, “I still have one marble left, so I will be okay.” Believe it!
LESSON #1:  Things are not as they first appear. Refrain from making judgments. Never assume; ask questions so you know. Be a thoughtful listener so you gain a deeper understanding. Open your mind to consider new perspectives. Develop a sense of wonder. Everyday events have significance and purpose. Pay attention so you will notice opportunities and be guided to resources that could improve your situation. Listen to and trust your “little voice.” Believe in miracles, but don’t count on them. The journey of life is full of bumps in the road, detours and a few delays. Stay on the road and you will reach your destination.

LESSON #2:  Turn and face the unknowns that your future holds - one day at a time. Consider your future to be filled with possibility. Believe your life has a Divine purpose. Take advantage of every opportunity to improve your health, your attitude and your abilities. Figure out what’s holding you back. Identify what you need to achieve – experience, training, education, confidence, support? Consult experts. Ask for feedback. Listen to good advice. Recruit or hire a mentor. Be willing to try new things and take risks.

LESSON #3:  Things don’t always go as planned. Expect to experience unexpected difficulties when you break your normal routine, start something new (job, college, relationship) or introduce a new experience or unfamiliar environment. Re-assure your self-confidence by acknowledging that it is not realistic for you to always pre-determine difficulties or equip yourself with strategies in advance. Snags or setbacks – both are part of the natural process of growing and maturing (two steps forward and one-step back). Celebration vs expectation – celebrate when things go well with your first attempt.

LESSON #4:  Never give-up or lose hope. Surrender. But don’t give up. Surrender means quit fighting for that which will never be. Let go of the cheated feeling you are holding onto because your hopes and dreams are not working out accordingly, to your plan. Get busy building your new plan. Or explore new possibilities. Passion is the fuel that keeps burning long after most would give-up trying.

Overwhelmed? Don’t know where/how to start? Identify one thing that would make the biggest difference or one thing that would make you feel happy. Do it. Repeat. (Tip: Doing something that makes you feel happy often leads to also doing that one thing that makes the biggest difference.)

LESSON #5:  Adopt a thriver attitude. A positive attitude is your greatest asset. You can’t always choose what happens to you, but you always get to choose how you deal with it. Commit to be teachable by asking yourself, “What did I learn from this? What can I do so this doesn’t happen again?” Develop personalized systems or strategies that work best for you. ASK is not a four-letter word. Help is available if you will ask. Be mindful that you do not attach negative emotions to trying something you have never done before: learning new technologies, experimenting with different medications or treatments, or exploring a new path for your life. Attach a hopeful expectation or at least try to stay emotionally neutral.

Lesson #6:  Take the Tortoise Track. It doesn’t take a lightening pace, slow and steady wins a race. Daily consistent effort – small steps repeated consistently over-time produce magical results. Practice patience, tolerance and determination. Set realistic expectations and longer time-lines – adjust both as needed.

LESSON #7:  Practice a daily recovery habit. Take regular breaks to restore your physical and mental energy. Use pacing to protect against rapid wear-down. Quiet your mind and breathe deeply. Drink water. Nap. Learn coping strategies. Use movement, music, or nature to outwardly release stressful emotions. (Screen time is a distraction; screen time does not release frustration nor disappointment.) Develop a healthy sense of humor. Incorporate play and fun into your life (1 fun thing every day). Recognize when you are becoming “terminal serious.” Laugh about something or laugh for no reason, just laugh every day.

Things are not as they first appear . . .

©2016 Lois McElravy ★ 406.251.2887 ★ info@lessonsfromlois.com ★ www.lessonsfromlois.com

Survive and Thrive
Living with a Disability
Seven Lessons from Lois
SURVIVE, REVIVE, and THRIVE with Humor and Laughter

Seven Guidelines to Introduce Humor in Sensitive Situations ... like stress, failure, injury, loss, disability

1. Understand that humor comes with a pecking order. It is the person who is adversely affected who sets the tone and grants permission (disability, illness, embarrassment, failure, loss). It is generally acceptable for those who are close to the person affected and have shared in their experience to join in and poke fun at the situation. Those who aren’t...shouldn’t.

2. With trauma or crisis, a period of time is often needed to allow for emotional distancing and healing before victims are able or ready to enjoy humor or laugh. Look for cues. (Wait for them to use humor first, or if they are hospitalized, look in their room for signs of funny gifts or cards). Test their mood to check for “play-mode.” If your attempt to use humor fails, stop. Make amends by apologizing and telling them your intentions. (Use humor privately to help you cope.)

3. Always acknowledge their “true feelings” with empathy before attempting humor. “That must have been embarrassing. I bet you felt disappointed.” Humor perceived as an attempt to discount, distract, or ignore a situation that is distressing to the person who experienced it, generally won’t be well received without first acknowledging the situation or empathizing with their feelings.

The greatest gift you can give someone who is struggling is to acknowledge their feelings and praise their effort, courage, determination, or perseverance. Save the pep talks. Just because things could be worse, doesn’t make them better. Sometimes it takes a while for a bright side to show up. The saying, “Things happen for a reason”--that’s what we say to others when we don’t know what else to say. It’s not what we want to hear someone say to us (at that moment).

4. Begin by using self-effacing humor, sharing a similar challenge or pain, “Reminds me of a time when I ...” Or, propose a different perspective, “One day we’ll laugh about this. Would this be funny if it happened tomorrow? Next week? Next month? To someone else?” (Coworkers, bosses, or siblings usually generate hearty laughs.)

5. Poke fun at the “situation,” not at the person. This will help them learn how to separate what they do or what happens to them from who they are and teach them how to laugh at unfortunate circumstances or the silly things they do without putting themselves down or making fun of themselves. Check to see if a person is laughing before you make this statement, “I’m not laughing at you, I’m laughing with you.” This is often said to people who are not laughing at their situation.

6. Be aware that someone in crisis can be overly sensitive to laughter, particularly if an injury, loss or major embarrassment has occurred. This may be an area of “wounded-ness” for a while. Pay special attention to notice if they seemed hurt or offended by your laughter, so you can communicate what caused you to laugh and you can assure them you were not laughing at them, nor making light of their situation. “I wasn’t expecting to hear what you said, you caught me by surprise.” Or, “I couldn’t help but laugh when I saw you walk into the closet by mistake. The look on your face when you popped back out was hilarious.”

7. Suggest an activity involving humor, such as watching a comedy, or reading the comics. Find other things to laugh about together. Laughing about past good times also helps restore hope for the future.

Survive and Thrive with Humor and Laughter . . .

©2016 Lois McElravy ★ 406.251.2887 ★ info@lessonsfromlois.com ★ www.lessonsfromlois.com
Lessons from Lois --- some learned from personal experiences, some learned from asking others for help, some learned from the “school of hard knocks.”

“Lessons we learn the hard way, we learn fast and well. Life provides opportunities to teach us what we need to know to survive and thrive, for as long as we remain teachable.” – Lois McElravy

1. **Five-step problem solving strategy:**
   - Step 1: Initiate.
   - Step 2: Strategize.
   - Step 3: Test.
   - Step 4: Tweak
   - Step 5: Repeat steps 1 – 4.

A few examples:

**Step 1:** Breath and calm emotions.
- “This has never happened to me before.”
- “That didn’t turn out the way I thought it would.”
- “I didn’t expect that to happen.”

Use humor to reconnect whole brain. (Opposites/exaggerations)
- “That went well.” (when something did not go well)
- “That was fun.” (when something was not fun)
- “This is going to be easy.” (when something is going to be a challenge)

State the problem you wish to resolve.

**Step 2:** “What can I do so this never happens to me again?”
- “What can I do differently?” (next time?)
- “Who do I know who might be able to offer me a suggestion? insight?” assistance?
- “Is this something I can do by myself?”
- “What do I need to be successful? (training, tools, instructions?)
- “Do I want (need) to pay someone to do this for me?”

**Step 3:** Try your new strategy or approach. If your problem is resolved … celebrate!

**Step 4:** If your strategy didn’t resolve the problem, or
If your strategy resolved the problem but also created a new problem - advance to step 5.

**Hint:** Patience and persistence. Third time’s the charm or three strikes and you’re out! If you strike out three times, don’t quit. Call a time-out. Step back into the process with a fresh outlook or with outside assistance.
2. **Turn a “NO” into a “YES”:** Simply ask the question, “How do I turn your NO into a YES?”
   Then go do what needs to be done.
   The answer might be, “I don’t know.” Second question you must ask, “Who would know?”
   Continue asking this question until you identify the decision maker.
   If answered, “It’s complicated,” then you respond, “I just need to know the first step, not the whole complicated process. Please tell me the first thing I must do.” Then go do it.
   Go back and say, “I’ve completed the first step. What is the next step?” Then go do it. Repeat.

“Small steps repeated consistently over time produce magical results.” – Lois McElravy

3. **How to afford the “COST” of living, disability or no disability:** Each of us deals with real limitations (weak points that make us less effective).
   a. **Acknowledge your limitation** (examples: money, time, education/training, skill/talent, health, environment, circumstances of life, ability, disability)
   b. **View your limitation as having the qualities of a bank account that starts each day with a fixed balance.** (Examples: low physical energy, low cognitive endurance, migraines)
   c. **Identify withdrawals** - activities, influences, vulnerabilities that affect your condition.
   d. **Make deposits** - compensatory ways to support your performance, reduce your vulnerabilities and improve your condition.
   e. **Evaluate the cost of your decisions.** Everything counts. You pay a price for everything you do or don’t do. Can you afford to pay the cost? Is the cost too high? If the cost is high, what can you do to afford or offset the cost?
   f. **Goal: maintain a balance in your “limitation account” so you last longer, strengthen your endurance, maintain ability, lessen pain, increase satisfaction and enjoyment.**

4. **Sweet Spots:** Look for the periods of day when you are best suited to perform specific tasks. Identify these periods of time as “sweet spots” of ability. Plan to do tasks that require concentration or comprehension during your sweet spots of cognition. Run errands when outside stimulation will be lowest. Drive when reflexes are quickest and traffic is slowest. Do outside chores when temperatures and brightness suit you best.

5. **Sequences vs schedules:** Develop sequences of activity that you can start at any time and complete. Example: wake up, eat, take medications, check for appointments, exercise, shower, daily housekeeping, plan meals, email. Instead of assigning these activities to a time slot in a planner, start them upon rising and complete them. If you have a morning appointment, you can either create a different set of sequences to use for morning appointments, or partially complete your sequence and resume when returning from your appointment. Similar to developing routines.

   **Advantages:** You are not tied to a time slot to do specific activities and are more likely to complete the sequence of activities if you do not have to readjust the time of events and less likely to skip an activity in an attempt to get back on track with the planner schedule timeline. Completing sequences of activity helps you to establish consistency with tasking and allows flexibility to accommodate keeping appointments, late morning starts, and lower energy days.
6. **Set Intentions**: Helps you initiate activities, trains you to stay on task, assists your time management, and holds you accountable.

Before starting a task, purposely set an intention by identifying these criteria:

- **Period of time**: increment of time (next 30 minutes); a specific stop time (4 p.m.)
  - Set a timer to remind you when your “intentional period” has ended.
- **Identify the specific activity you wish to accomplish during that time and write it down**: (examples) sort through mail, return phone messages, wash dishes, go for a walk, plan dinner menu, fold laundry, cut grass, water flowers
- **Get busy doing what you set your intention to do. Do not stop until you hear the timer.**
- **Check-in with yourself**: Ask yourself, “Did I do what I intended to do?” Yes? No?
  - If your response is, “What was I supposed to be doing?” Then check your written reminder.
- **Reset your intention**: If you got distracted or off task, reset your intention, set the timer and start over.
- **Set a new intention**: Pause and take notice. If you held your intention and stayed on task, give yourself recognition and a “GOOD JOB”! If you did not complete the task, assess how you feel before continuing. Do you need to take a break or pace yourself before resuming the task? If so, set your next intention to take a break for a specific period of time. Or if you want to pace yourself, set your next intention to switch to another activity for a specific period of time. (I extend my cognitive endurance by rotating between two activities, one that requires concentration and one that is a physical or routine activity that allows my ‘brain battery’ to recharge. I must set intentions to rotate between the two activities, because if I am not intentional I will likely get side-tracked and be working on five tasks at one time and not complete one of them.)

**TIP**: Setting intentions is a useful tool to help you initiate activities, resist your impulse to jump from one task to another, extend your cognitive endurance and increase your productivity. Setting intentions is not to be used to “beat yourself down” when the timer rings and you are not doing what you set your intention to do. Smile, chuckle, and keep resetting your intention.

> “Technology, though not my best friend, proves to be a helpful companion.” – Lois McElravy

7. **Assist your memory with a smart phone**: (voice activated)
   - **Wear a phone pouch**: Or keep your phone within reach at all times. (Amazon.com $10)
   - **Set reminders (repeat feature)**: medications, appointments, events, paying bills
   - **Set timers/alarms**: intentions, time management
   - **Camera**: Take a picture of your shopping list or to do list for back up; a picture of where you park your car; something you impulsively wish to buy but don’t need or can’t afford; appointment cards; doctor’s instructions or a list of questions for your doctor appointment.
   - **GPS**: Assist you with directions when lost.
   - **Calendar**: Reduce double booking and missed appointments or events. Set reminders.
   - **Contacts**: Keep all your phone numbers in one place and instant access to addresses.
   - **Notes and lists**: Capture important thoughts and keep from losing them (notes, texts, email).
1. Transportation – majority of PLWBI don’t drive nor have a means of transportation. This requires making arrangements for travel anytime they want to go anywhere. Taking the bus requires planning and that is a barrier without help at first. Walking isn’t an option for some.

2. Adaptive Technology and Compensatory Strategies – recorders and videos work great, but remember that it takes double (or triple) the time to re-listen or watch. (which is 2-3 times more information for the brain to process and comprehend.) Poor short term memory requires using strategies like coding (using several ways - writing, seeing, saying, hearing, visualizing to create memory hooks) or rehearsals (repeating by saying aloud 3-5 times), or other memory systems, using mnemonics. Adaptive technology and compensatory strategies require additional time and brain power above and beyond the classwork or job. Upfront the learning curve is huge.

3. Brain Battery vs Time to Complete Homework – PLWBI can rarely do their homework when they first get home from school. Their brain battery is drained too low. They need to take a nap to recharge their brain battery so they can think. The danger of taking a nap is that they fear they may not be able to wake up or have trouble sleeping at night. Even when setting an alarm, waking up from a nap to clear thinking takes a period of time. If the person doesn’t take a nap and jumps into their homework when they are tired, chances are it will take them 3-4 times longer to complete it. Also, each day that the PLWBI pushes through when they are tired, their window of intelligent thinking shortens the next day, until they end up walking around like a zombie or they collapse from exhaustion. Incomplete homework is more often the result of no brain power, rather than laziness or lack of time (unless it’s taking them 3-4 times longer than necessary to do their homework because thinking processes are slower due to being over-tired and ineffective).

4. Sequencing – When given two or more instructions at one time, PLWBI will get overwhelmed, remember only the last thing they heard and attempt to do that first. If the instructions were a set that needed to be performed in an ordered sequence, now the PLWBI is stuck. Or if there were two things to be completed, they would do only the last item. OR … they might hear the first instruction and immediately start thinking about how they are going to do that (ADHD), tune out and never hear that there was a part two. Either way, this complicates their life because they are making mistakes and don’t complete some of their work. They blame it on being blind-sighted, or not knowing.

5. Transitioning – PLWBI function best with a rigid routine and structure. They do not transition well. When setting up their school/work schedule, they must decide if it would be better to attend the class/job a few hours a day five days a week, OR extend the hours on three days and stay at home two of the week days. Is it better to attend two classes back to back on the same day, OR take 2 classes on the same day with 1-2 hours of rest between classes? Medication schedules and side effects are a factor when determining the best time of day to attend classes.
1. **SLEEP DISTURBANCES** – lack of sleep will **significantly** lower cognitive ability and slow reflexes. (example: non-brain injury sleep deprived drivers fail driving tests) Sleep disturbances are common. There seems to be a trend of **deepest** sleep taking place between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m. Early mornings are generally not the most effective time to function well. Lack of sleep lowers ability to pay attention. Memory is dependent on paying attention.

2. **ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES** – noise, movement, bright lights, smells, crowds. Sensitivities to loud noises or high activity environments can cause a rapid wear-down, the person’s cognitive function drops and social skills get lost until they take a nap. OR the person gets overstimulated. Overstimulation can turn somewhat manic and it happens quickly. The person can act immature and silly, or grow agitated until enraged. Overstimulation → agitation → rage. (Computers, video games, Wii, t.v., music, repetitive noises, tapping, chewing; movement-bouncing a foot, or touching-bumping into while waiting in line.)

3. **DUAL DIAGNOSIS** – substance abuse (33% of accidents resulting in TBI involved drugs or alcohol).

4. **OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS** – depression (unavoidable – chemical imbalance of the brain), seizures, anger, aggression, agitation, pain management, headache, migraines, ADHD, emergence of mental health problems or exacerbation of pre-existing mental health, mobility issues, posttraumatic stress, speech problems, vision disturbances, hormone imbalance, thyroid, cognitive deficits-poor attention/focus/memory, slow comprehension/processing, slow initiation.

5. **MEDICATION SIDE-EFFECTS** – (anti-seizure meds, anti-depressants) groggies, drowsiness, energy drop, fatigue, dizziness, headache, insomnia, slow comprehension, poor attention, slow reflexes, agitation, depression. Schedules interfere with taking medications properly and timely.

6. **IMPAIRED ABILITY TO ACCURATELY ASSESS OR LOGICALLY REASON** – when tired or over-stimulated, ability to consistently use good judgment and make good decisions fluctuates and risk for acting impulsively increases.

7. **SOCIAL SKILLS** – environmental influences and brain drain from deep concentration blurs social behavior awareness, (risk increases to offend others with behavior), risk increases for disruptive behavior because impulse control will be less, plus prone to quicker agitation, prone to immature childish behaviors like acting silly, being sassy, showing off, throwing fits or pouting, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and miscommunication are common due to being literal and unable to read body language (correctly or not at all) nor pick up on social cues.

```markdown
Things are not as they first appear . . .
```
1. **HARD TO JUDGE CAPABILITIES** – PLWBI commonly think they are capable of doing more than they reasonably can do and maintain over time. Family members, care-givers and even professionals (often with good reason and based on experience) might not support the aspirations of the PLWBI. When passion is involved, the capability of the PLWBI frequently lies in-between (less than the PLWBI thought, but more than others believed). Regardless, if possible, the PLWBI needs to be allowed to test their capabilities, even if that means they will fail. It’s part of the process they need to go through to come to terms with their abilities and move towards accepting their reality. Otherwise they feel like they are being treated unfairly, like a child who is being told what they can and cannot do.

2. **ADDRENALIN ADVANTAGE** – When the PLWBI is passionate and excited about doing something, they can be very convincing. When they are starting something new, the thrill of doing something meaningful is very powerful. Adrenalin is a powerful drug. It sharpens thinking, quickens reflexes, and increases energy. In the beginning, the PLWBI appears to be managing their new undertaking extremely well. Be watchful for the time when the PLWBI is no longer producing the adrenalin. A second component that goes along with this is that the PLWBI doesn’t easily transition into a new schedule. About the time they are no longer producing adrenalin, if they have been skimping on other areas of their rest or medical management because they’ve been spending their time on their new project, this is when the PLWBI will crash. Teachers, employers, VR counselors will ask, “What happened? Everything was going so well?” Or worse, it could be perceived that the PLWBI got lazy, wasn’t serious, or lost interest.

3. **PLWBI ARE AFRAID TO TELL WHEN THINGS AREN’T GOING WELL** – PLWBI don’t speak up right away when things aren’t going well. The first reason: they are most likely at fault to some degree. They know it and plan to correct it. When they can’t, they get embarrassed, or stuck. The second reason: Deep concentration or sitting in a room that is over-stimulating for one hour is enough to land you into the O-Zone. The O-Zone is where you cross into Oblivion and you don’t know that you don’t know. What you do know is that things aren’t going well. What you don’t know is how to fix it. It doesn’t occur to ask for help. You just keep doing what you’ve always done. (Rule of Holes) The third reason: they are afraid of more loss – services, privileges, independence.

**DON’T ASSUME** things are going well, ASK, “What is going well? What is not going well?” “Are you taking your medications on time every day? Are you having any transportation problems? How do you keep track of your schedules/appointments/assignments? What type of reminder system do you use?”

4. **PLWBI NEED YOU TO BE SPECIFIC** – when asking questions be specific. For example, instead of asking how school is going, ask, “How much homework are you getting? Are you completing it on time? Are you staying up late to work on it? How many nights a week do you get a full night’s rest? Do you have any tests this week? What is your grade in ___?”

Instead of asking how work is going, ask, “What is going well? What is not going well? What is your favorite part? What is difficult? Who do you go to when you need help?”

When giving instructions, ask them to repeat back to you what you want them to do, how and when you want them to do it, and how they will remember to do it.

---

©2016 Lois McElravy  ★  406.251.2887  ★  info@lessonsfromlois.com  ★  www.lessonsfromlois.com
OFFERING AND ACCEPTING CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM / SUGGESTIONS / ADVICE:

Family member / Caregiver / Professional: When the PLWD (Person(s) Living with Disability) won't listen to what you say, find a different messenger to deliver your sensitive message, someone who the PLWD trusts and will be open to hear. What's most important is that the message will be received.

PLWD: Consider the source of the message. Is the person who provided constructive criticism or offered advice someone you trust? Does this person say or do things to purposely hurt you? If so, seek a second opinion. Or does this person genuinely care about you? If the answer is yes, then you will want to stop and consider what they are telling you.

One strategy that works well for giving and receiving advice is for the PLWD to identify two people who they agree to trust - unconditionally. The PLWD agrees to listen to their advice, even when they don't agree with them (based on the PLWD's inconsistency to accurately assess and logically reason.) The PLWD also agrees to ask their "trusted advisors" for feedback whenever they disagree with the opinions or advice of others. The PLWD agrees to accept the conclusions and advice their "trusts" provide.

This arrangement provides a valuable resource for the PLWD to help them accurately assess situations, make good decisions and respond appropriately. The PLWD knows that if they don't respect and accept the recommendations of the "trusts," they will lose their help. The benefit of having two "trusts" is that it allows some protection from receiving unreasonable recommendations or poor advice. The PLWD can go to both "trusts" with the same request and if they don't get similar feedback, call a conference to resolve it.

It is important and necessary for the PLWD to come to his own conclusions.

PLWD often believe they are capable of doing more than they are realistically capable of maintaining. Family members and professionals, based on several reliable factors or because they want to protect the PLWD from the disappointment of failure, assign a level of capability they believe is realistic for the PLWD. Frequently their level of capability is somewhere in the middle of the two.

It is necessary to allow PLWD the opportunity to stretch their limits...even to the point of failing. It is important for the PLWD to come to his/her own conclusions about their limitations/capabilities, in order for healthy acceptance to take place. It is damaging to the self-esteem of a PLWD when they feel others don't believe in their potential and don't support their desire to try something.

It is a painful process for those who care for the PLWD to stand by and watch, because the PLWD will repeat this pattern, looking to find something they can do which gives their life purpose. Resist the temptation to say, "I told you so" when things don't turn out well, and instead find something positive to acknowledge "I admire your courage" or "Your determination makes me proud." Helping the PLWD to identify and focus on what was gained or learned transforms the disappointment into a valuable experience and helps prevent repeat episodes.

PLWD need help to self-monitor when they are in social settings.

Social settings are full of contributing factors that make PLWD vulnerable to rapid cognitive wear-down or over-stimulation and put them at risk for saying or doing things that are socially inappropriate or unacceptable. Taking a buddy along to help them self-monitor is one way PLWD can enjoy a social life without risking embarrassment or rejection. (Resource: Social Awareness Success Kit)
One Fun Thing Every Day — Each day before noon, make a plan to do one fun thing for 20-30 minutes, before the end of the day. It can be anything you choose, go for a walk, enjoy a special treat, watch a favorite television show, take a nap, read a book, visit with a friend, turn your cell phone off and play hooky from the world.

Three Good Things at the End of Each Day — Last thing before going to bed (or at the end of work), recall three good things for that day. These can be accomplishments, nice surprises, or even things that didn’t go well, but turned out better than usual. Not allowed to recall disappointments, nor things that didn’t get done.

Call on Your Sense of Humor — Humor is the ability see the “funny” when there is no funny and appreciate the amusement life provides. When things don’t go as planned, ask yourself, “Would this would be funny if it was happening to someone else? Will this be funny tomorrow? Is there a humorous side to this?” If we are able to look for the humor in that moment, we can provide the distance we need to regain our perspective. Then we might just crack a smile, and find a way to laugh about it.

Laughter is Your Pressure Relief Valve — Acute stress causes the two hemispheres of our brain to become disconnected. This explains why we might feel flustered, act clumsy, fumble, drop things, and make mistakes when we get stressed out. Laughter activates the limbic system in our brain, reconnecting the right and left sides and improves our mental clarity. Laughter helps us do more whole brain work which allows us to tap into our creative thinking, and problem solve at a higher capacity. You don’t have to laugh about your troubles, just find some way you can laugh... about something, somewhere, with someone. Just laugh!

Release Yourself from the “Fear of Not Measuring Up” — When you feel overwhelmed or inadequate, remind yourself, “I don’t have to know how to do everything, nor have every answer. I just have to know someone who does.” ASK is not a four-letter word. Asking for assistance is not nearly as painful as crying for help. It is healthy for us to laugh at our shortcomings. It allows us the opportunity to embrace our flaws, and promotes self-acceptance. It does not include harmful putdowns, ridicule or negative sarcasm. Nor are we advertising that we are defective, rather we are demonstrating that we are human. All we can do is give our best effort, and our best varies from day to day.

Listen to Your Inner Wisdom — When you can’t think straight, tune in to your intuition, your gut feeling, or the knowing of your heart. Don’t allow your intelligence or logical reasoning to overrule or discount your inner wisdom. Pay attention to your little voice. Your little voice will comfort, correct and protect you, guide you to the answers you need and direct you to your purpose.

“When life knocks you down, humor is the magic wand that will cushion your fall, lift you back up and point you in a new direction.” ~ Lois McElravy

Survive and Thrive with Humor and Laughter ... 🌟 🌟 🌟