

# EMPOWER



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# Meaning Making

## ACTIVITY SHEET



Trying to make sense of critical incidents and high impact life events is called 'Meaning-Making'. The meaning that you ascribe to hardship serves to influence how you move forward – not only how you reconcile the trial you've endured, but also how you view yourself, others and God in the midst of that trial.



### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**This session is designed to help you understand:**

- (a) how 'unrealistic optimism' may inadvertently trip you up
- (b) there is beauty to be found in your brokenness
- (c) God can make all things new

# Unrealistic Optimism

Some people have trouble accepting how a 'good God' can let 'bad things' happen. This may in part be due to a psychological phenomenon known as 'unrealistic optimism'. If you view the world as benevolent and controllable, and view yourself as 'deserving' goodness, you may have difficulty making sense of why adversity has come knocking on your door. As such, you may draw false conclusions.



What conclusion might be drawn based on the following unrealistic optimistic beliefs?

## Unrealistic Optimism

"People get what they deserve. The good get blessed and the bad get punished"
"Life is supposed to be fair, isn't it? I am a good, decent person. I don't deserve this"
"It wasn't supposed to end like this. How could they let this happen?"
"If only I had tried harder or found another way, I could have saved them"

## Unrealistic Optimism

<i>Example:</i> "I must be being punished for my past mistakes"



**DUE TO 'UNREALISTIC OPTIMISM', PEOPLE TYPICALLY RATE THEIR OWN CHANCES OF ENCOUNTERING A CRITICAL INCIDENT OR HIGH IMPACT LIFE EVENT AS BEING LOWER THAN OTHERS. WHILE, OF COURSE, EVERYONE IS WELL AWARE THAT BAD THINGS 'COULD' HAPPEN, IT OFTEN COMES AS A SHOCK WHEN ADVERSITY STRIKES.**



What conclusion might be drawn based on the following unrealistic optimistic beliefs? ✓

I deserve this, I brought it on myself		Murphy's Law: It if can go wrong, it will	
This is God telling me He's disappointed		People always let me down	
Karma: What goes around comes around		I attract bad luck wherever I go	
It's fate or destiny. There's nothing I can do		Why be honest if honesty doesn't pay	

**Q:** What might be a more helpful alternative conclusion to draw?

## Beauty in the Broken

The experience of suffering and hardship can change you. Whether that change is positive or negative depends, in part, on what meaning you derive from your experience. People can grow through tragic circumstances when they're able to (a) discover a greater meaning, (b) develop a renewed gratitude, and (c) actively grow in compassion and kindness toward others.



What conclusion might be drawn based on the following unrealistic optimistic beliefs?

**1: Relationships**

**2: Emotional Maturity**

**3: Walk with God**



WHEN WALKING THROUGH TRIALS, IT IS NATURAL TO REASON AND ASSIGN MEANING TO WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH. BUT DON'T JUST LET YOUR MIND DRAW RANDOM CONCLUSIONS ON AUTOPILOT.

**Be intentional about the kinds of questions you ask.**

# All Things Made New

If you come to accept the damage that's been done and allow the Master Potter to remould and shape you, all things can be made new. You may never be exactly the same again, but from the shattered pieces can come a new kind of beauty that you may never have expected. Consider how God might be taking what the enemy intended for evil and be turning it around for good.



## Complete the following sentences:

Even though I'd never want to go through it again, I'm thankful for my experience because

1. Now I can...

2. I have learnt...

3. God has shown me...

Q: How do you think God is using this circumstance to mould and shape you?

Q: What things do you think God still wants to show you?

Q: How might you use your experience and the lessons you've learnt to bless others?