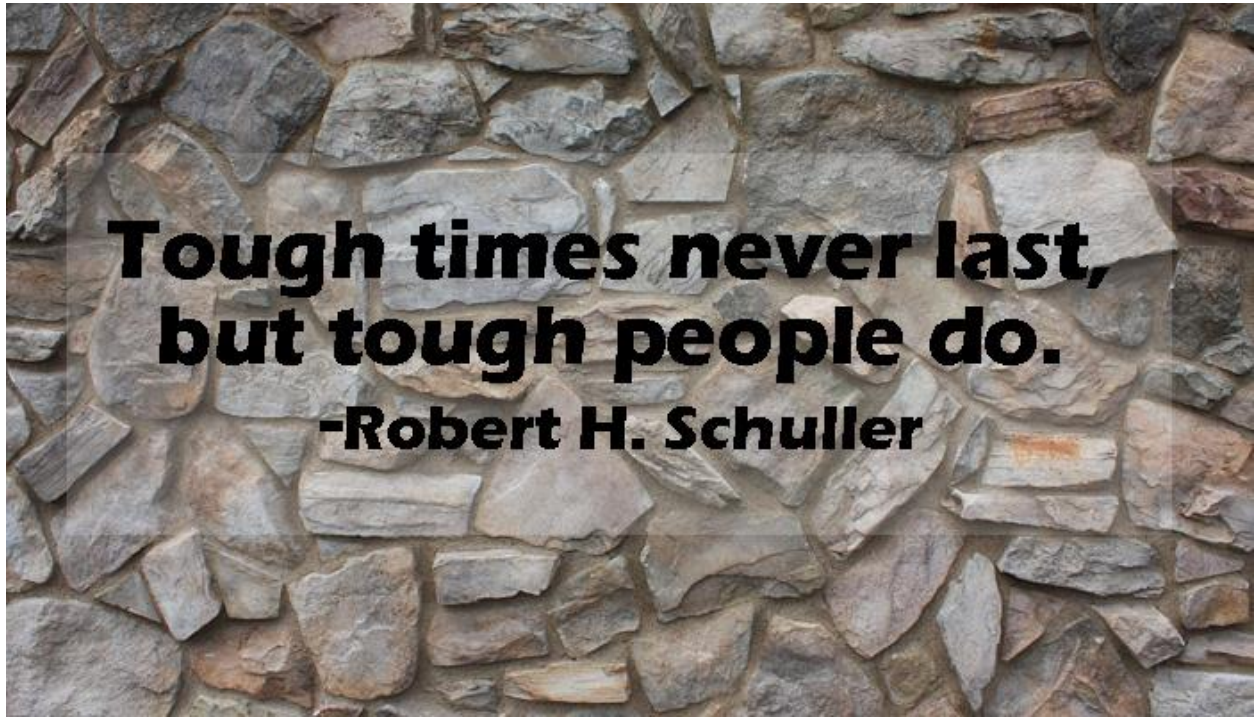




**15 Tips  
for Getting Through  
Tough Times**



## 15 Things to Remember as You Face Tough Times



The last couple of years have been a roller coaster for me. I finished school in December 2015 and that left me a little unclear as to what I would do next. So, I launched a new business helping other [chronic illness bloggers](#). Just when things seemed to be settling into a nice groove and business began picking up, life was thrown a curve ball.

My mom had cancer.

Thankfully, despite a lot of curveballs in the process, she came through like a champ and things seemingly returned to normal for a while.

At the beginning of 2017 I began doing a lot of introspection. It started with a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course that caused me to really start listening to my emotions and my body (instead of just climbing up in my head or escaping altogether). I experienced a lot of new things and really was forced to evaluate what I wanted in life. That evaluation led to divorce.

Soon after the divorce we found out my mom had cancer again. I was very thankful that that news came after the divorce or the stress would have been magnified greatly. As it

was I was able to focus on her, and be there for her in a way I wouldn't have been otherwise. Once again, she came through like a champ and is doing fabulous.

While I wasn't the one with cancer, it was all still pretty scary to me. The idea of possibly losing my mother scares the crap out of me and creates stress. I spent a lot of time with her, helping her, and taking her to appointments. This affected not just my energy but my motivation. It's hard to really focus on work, when all you can think about is the person in front of you. Instead, I often found myself escaping into TV, the internet, or food.

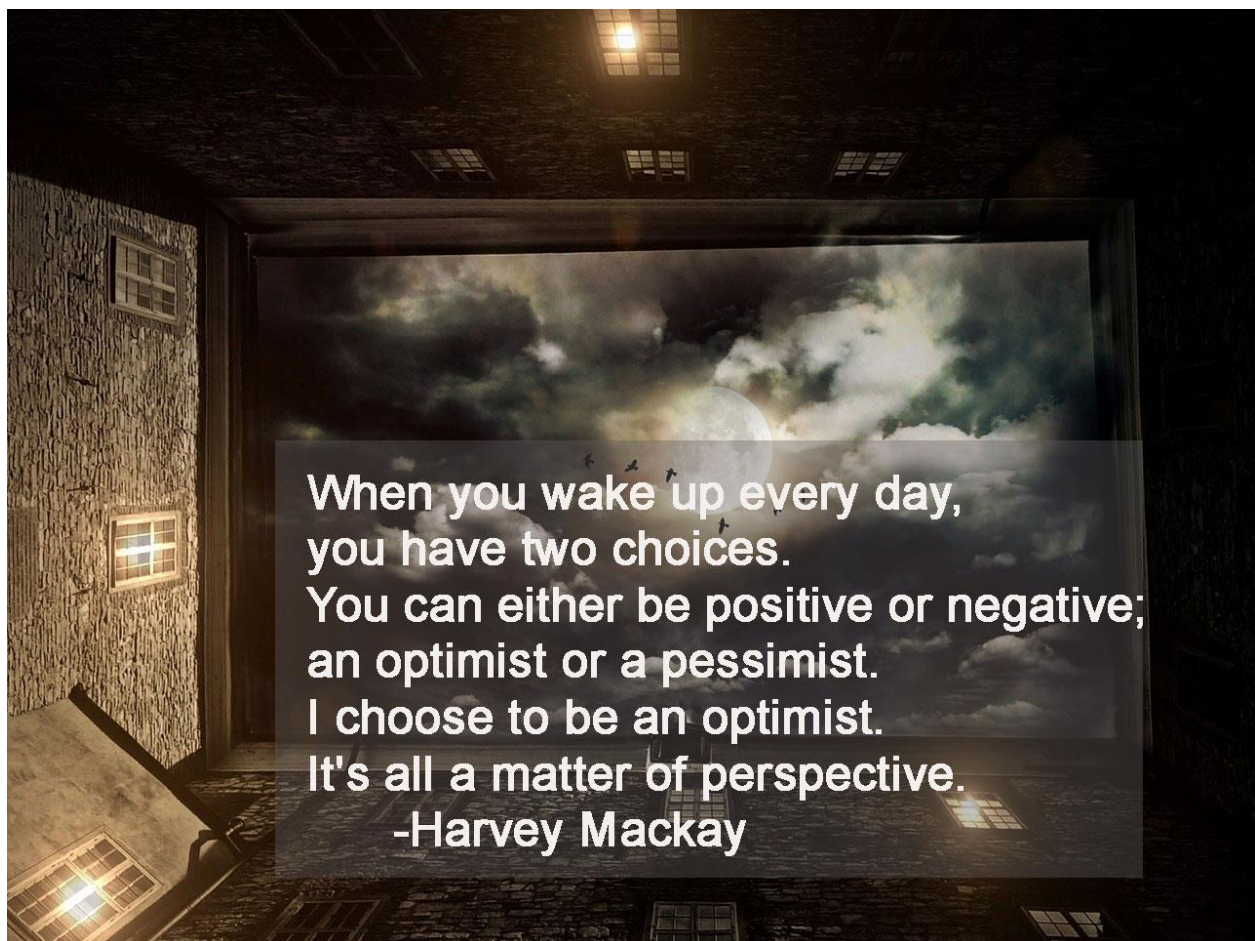
Realizing that I'm doing this is the first step to making a change and to getting my motivation back. The thing is that I love what I do. I love [my blog](#), I love writing, and helping others. But, I've struggled to really be present for any of those things, this past year. It's time to slow down again; to really be wherever I am and with whomever I'm with.



As we go through these tough times, I try to remember a few simple lessons....

- **Everything happens for a reason**, even though we may never know what the reason is. I struggle with this at times, but it is something that I believe.
- **I have to make an effort to learn from this.** If I hide from the struggle I will not learn. If I can face it and work through it, I can learn from it.
- **I will be stronger for having gone through this time.** By simply facing it and choosing to be positive rather than focus on what "could" happen I am stronger and it will be easier to stay positive through later tough times.

**“I will be stronger for having gone through this tough time.”**



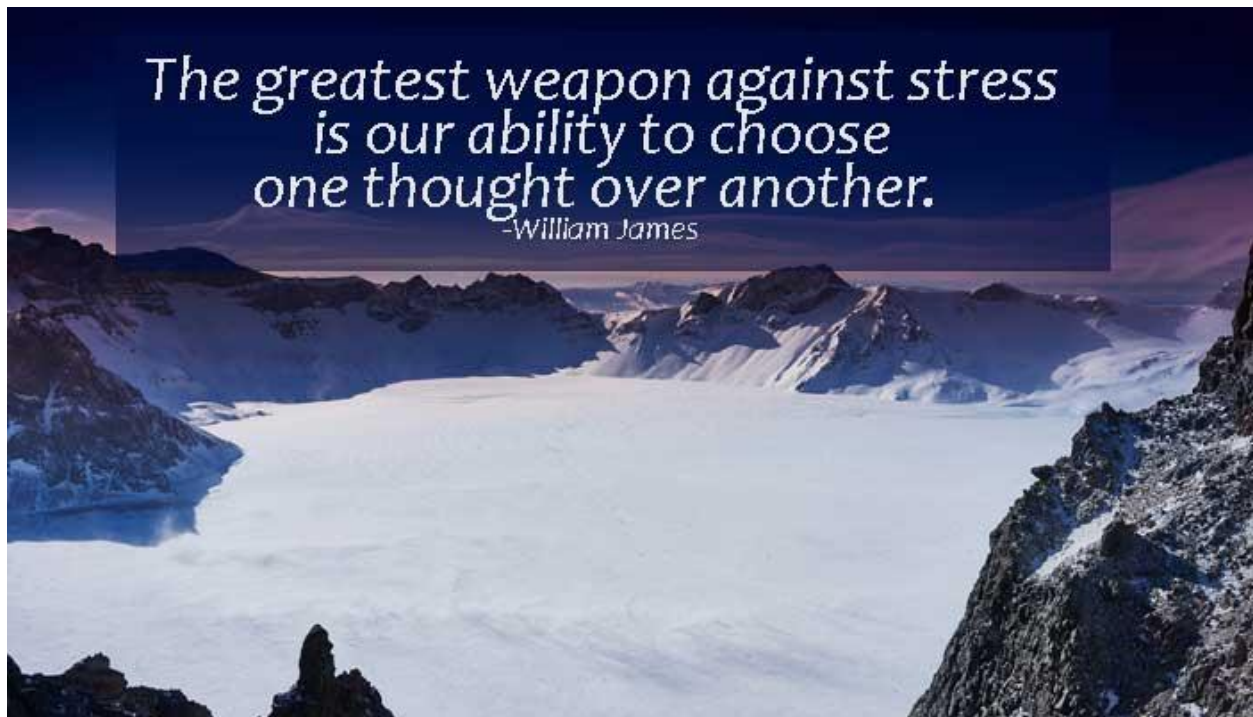


- **Perspective matters.** I could focus on the negative, I could ask "why me?" or "why my mom?" I honestly do ask the latter as my mom is the kindest, most giving person on the planet, why should she have to go through this?" But, it does not good to stay focused on that. What does do some good is to think about how I can help her. What can we do to get through this with the best chance of her coming out the other side healthy?
- **Things will change.** Life is constantly changing and whatever struggle I'm going through right now will pass. It may not pass in the way that I would prefer it to do so, but it will pass. Then we will be on to something else. I can't let myself get stuck in the negativity of life. I can't bury myself in a moment that will pass. I can't put my life on hold waiting for things to change, because they will change. If I continually put life on hold waiting for change I'll be on hold forever waiting for yet another change.
- **The only change I can force is the change in me.** I can't change the world around me. I have no control over my mom's cancer, but I do have control over how I react to what is going on. I have control over my feelings and my emotions. I can either allow myself to get stuck or I can take control and choose to be happy and choose to move forward.
- **Anything is possible.** Anything can happen in this moment, or in this life. I just have to be open to allowing it. If I shut down and refuse to accept change, or to accept what is then I am letting life pass me by and with it many amazing things. What's going to happen around me will happen regardless of me, but if I want positive things to happen in my own life I have to be open to anything.

**"Anything can happen in this moment, or in this life. I just have to be open to allowing it."**

As life happens we need to take a little time to absorb it, to deal with it. That might mean a short period of shut down. Just like a computer in order to reboot we have to shut down first. I've been in the midst of a reboot for the last few weeks, but now it's time to start up again and face life and whatever may happen.

As we all know, stress can really aggravate Fibromyalgia and other chronic illnesses. With that in mind I've had to make some adjustments to make things work. Regardless of those adjustments I'm finding that I'm more tired than usual, that I need to rest more, and that it's even more important for me to stick to my schedule. There are a few other things that I've found are really important right now to help me maintain my sanity, decrease my stress, and increase my happiness.



- **I have to create healthy boundaries** - there's a part of me that wants to be by my mom's side every minute of the day. If I could get her to stay here with me I'd be perfectly happy. But, I have to remember that she's an adult and needs her space. That said, I need my space, too. I need healthy space to be able to relax and not constantly be focused on her illness. This means that when she is around I've got to remember to keep things "normal" and not focus or let her stay focused on her illness.
- **I have to take a step back and breathe** - When we first found out mom had cancer and I researched the type of cancer she had I was getting beyond stressed at the "what could happen". Finally a friend pointed out that it was time to stop Googling and start focusing on enjoying my mom. Whatever will happen is going to happen no matter how much I research. I already know that the care plan they have for her is the best available at the moment. So, that's the best I can ask for.

Sometimes we get too wrapped up in a problem to really see it for what it is, and we need to step back.

**"Sometimes we get too wrapped up in a problem to really see it for what it is, and we need to step back."**

- **I need to take time to be grateful** - It would be easy to fall into a negative black hole right now and focus on the bad things, the misdiagnoses, and the frustrations. But, what's the point in that? Where would it get me? Yes, I did take some time and felt the emotions that were there. I still do take that time, but I'm doing my best to focus on the positive and to be grateful for what is. When I fear that I might lose my mother I have to remind myself that [I have that fear because I have something to be grateful for](#). I am grateful for having such a wonderful mother that I would fear to lose. But, I have much to be thankful for. This is why I've started keeping a gratitude journal to remind myself that there is much positive in my life.
- **I need to focus only on what I can control or change** - It's too easy to get sucked into worrying about things that I can't control or change. There's plenty of those things. But, there are plenty of things that I do have control over and that I can change as well. It's a lot less stressful if I choose to only focus on those things, and as I focus to work on changing what can be changed, one step at a time. I only have so much energy, why am I wasting it on things I can't control?

**"I only have so much energy, why am I wasting it on things I can't control?"**

- **I need to focus on this present moment** - Fear makes me focus on what might happen, when my focus should be on what is happening right now. When I can really be in the moment I can see so much more clearly. I can make the right decisions for the right reasons. I can show love to those around me, I can be present with those around me.

I believe it's important that we do our best to learn from everything that we go through. That's why we go through hardships, that's the purpose of life - to keep learning, to grow, then to pass on what we've learned and help others. When I can focus on this moment, on what I can control, I can be more grateful for what is, I can have healthy boundaries, and I can learn more from those around me about what life has to offer me.

I know that if I pace myself, if I REALLY pace myself I can accomplish everything that I need to and then some. I may not get it all done in one day but I can get it all done.

Despite it all, despite the frustration of knowing that I SHOULD feel better... that I've felt better in the past so why don't I feel better now. I know that when it's all said and done everything will be OK. I've learned time and time again that things will be OK in the end and that...

- **I am going through this to learn something** - Every time I've ever looked back at anything bad in my life and thought about how I might have changed it I've come to the same conclusion. I wouldn't change a thing. No matter how bad the thing was at the time, I wouldn't be who I am or where I am today if I changed anything about my past. So, while I may not see the value in what I'm going through in that moment, I can use history to know that someday I will see value.
- **How I feel about people and situations will change** - There have been so many people in my life that have passed through at various times that have really changed my life. At the time I might not have cared much for them, I might have wished they weren't in my life, but later those opinions might have changed. The alternate is also true, there have been plenty of people who I cared a great deal for at some point but later realized they weren't good for me (or I for them) and my feelings changed. The same is true for situations. I may not like the situation now but I know that I will likely look back on it and appreciate it. I hate that my mom has cancer but I love the extra time we are spending together. I love the extra stories she is telling me, the extra hugs we are sharing. And, to think, there was a time where she was not my favorite person.



- **There will always be tough times and tough choices** - The hubby and I often struggle through hard times. When things get really bad for whatever reason we have a tendency to not talk as much as we should. We both try to struggle through the hard time on our own because we don't want to weigh the other one down. We are learning and we are getting better, but what I've realized more than anything is that there's never going to be a time when the tough times are past. There will always be more tough times and we have to be there for each other as we each face those tough times. There will also be plenty of tough choices. It's hard to know in those moments if you are making the right choice, only time will tell us that. But, we will keep making those choices nonetheless.

**“There will always be tough times and tough choices, it’s what we do with them that matters.”**

- **Complaining is a waste of time** - I can spend time complaining about the hand that life has dealt me or I can use that time to make changes and get the life that I want. I prefer the latter. Sure, there are times when I need to vent. I need to just be pissed about what life is offering me in that moment, and I need someone to listen. But, then I need to accept it and [move on](#). Continuing to focus on the bad hand that I've been dealt does nothing for me, and the complaining only serves to push others away.

**"After a certain point, complaining is just a waste of time"**

- **My happiness depends on my thoughts** - Focusing on the positive won't heal me, but it will make me a hell of a lot happier. When I focus on the negative things, the what could happens, the what should happens, I become a negative person, I get depressed, and then I get very little done. Sometimes staying positive is really freaking hard, sometimes it's not possible and I realize in those moments that I just have to let go and give in for a little while. I just can't get lost in the negatives. I can't let it take over my life. I can have a pity party but it needs to have a cut-off time, then I need to return to focusing on the positive, because my happiness depends on it.

**Happiness can exist  
only in acceptance.**

**George Orwell**



I would love to connect with you. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

*Julie Ryan*

**Counting My Spoons**

<http://countingmyspoons.com>

Connect with me!

