

Rough Patches

By Sgt. Steve

You ever have one of those times in your life where it seems like the hits just keep coming? Where every day for weeks or months, you seem to collect a new problem, something else goes sideways, or you take another loss?

That's what it's been like for me during the past month. Just so we are all on the same page, I'm going to call times like this a **"rough patch."** I imagine most of you have had similar times in your lives. You might be going through one also.

My Rough Patch: *For me, during the past month I have: been attacked by a pit bull, undergone all the rabies treatments, dealt with workers comp, been the victim of credit card fraud, dealt with petty coworkers and politically motivated issues, been lied about and complained on. All while trying to maintain my busy working, writing, and teaching schedule. Most recently, I had a sudden death in the family that involved dropping everything to be there for family, and of course dealing with my own grief.*

I listed all of that not so that anyone will feel sorry for me, but to explain that I am currently undergoing my own "rough patch." Today I want to share with you some of the Stoic thoughts and tactics that I am using to see myself through and get to the other side.

Perspective

For starters, I am defining this time as a "rough patch" when I think about it in my own head. My life doesn't suck, this isn't the norm, and this isn't any indication of how things will go from now on. This is all just temporary, and mentally taking a step back to realize that in the context of my entire life, this rough patch is just a blip; a minor deviation from what is usual.

My One Job

Another thing I'm trying to keep in mind, is my overall goal here to keep an eye on my job description for life: *"My one job, my overall role is to be good... no matter what."* Subscribing to the Stoic idea

that “Virtue is the only good” is highly useful to me.

- It’s not “behave a certain way, so long as things are going my way.”
- It’s not “be good as long as things are easy.”
- It’s not “have good character, so long as others act honorably.”

The goal and the mission “Be a good person...no matter what.” is using Virtue as true north, it is a directional arrow that guides both my actions and my thoughts. Bad luck, chance, Fate, Murphy’s Law, can dictate a lot of things in my life, but they can’t touch my pursuit of Virtue. In that way, I always have the power, even during my worst days.

“Just that you do the right thing. The rest doesn’t matter.”

— MARCUS AURELIUS

Confidence

I’m also working on my confidence. I think confidence helps you not panic and not make things worse when the problems pile up. What you believe is something you can control. So it is useful to believe that I can handle whatever happens next.

“Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present.”

— MARCUS AURELIUS

One Thing At a Time

Reminding myself of my limitations is also helpful. I can’t do everything all at once. I am limited to what I can do right here, right now. Just taking things one at a time, and being okay with small amounts of progress or tiny bits of recovery. Making lists on my phone of what I can do now, and what I’ll need to do eventually, helps a lot.

“*The whole future lies in uncertainty. Live now, in the immediate present.*” – Seneca

Help Others

Helping others is one of the skills I teach in class, and something I'm actively trying to do while I navigate my way back to normal. I don't want to get hyper-focused on myself and my problems. That is the road to self-pity. It won't help me be resilient or proactive about solving problems or adapting. Helping other people as much as possible keeps me from dwelling on my own issues.

"He who serves the common good serves his own."

— SENECA

That's how I'm getting through my rough patch. That is what I'm doing to respond to life and not react to circumstances. It helps me to have a system and a plan moving forward. It helps me to have perspective. Hopefully you will be able to use some of these skills next time you have a rough patch of your own.

"You have power over your mind, not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength."

**Amor Fati,
Sgt. Steve**