SPINNING INTO CONTROL

5 STEPS TO SURVIVE ANY ADVERSITY

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October 1, 2015. Chris Mintz was beginning his day of classes at Umpqua Community College near Roseburg, Oregon. The decorated US Army veteran, a North Carolina native, had resumed his studies as part of starting a new life in the Pacific Northwest with his wife and son. Today was his son’s sixth birthday.

Midway during his first class, Chris heard yelling, and then what was unmistakably gunfire. Chris and his teacher quickly evacuated the classroom. As he fled down the hallway, he heard someone say that no one had alerted the library. They would be caught by the shooter unawares.

*Flee to safety and leave them to die or—*

*Chris ran to the library.*

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Sometimes disaster strikes you out of the blue, like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky. Other times you see the storm brewing long before the strike hits the ground. Maybe you were following proper lightning safety procedures, or maybe you were standing on a 14,000-foot mountain with a metal rod in your hand. However you came to be a victim, if you want to be a survivor, the first thing you must do is take responsibility for where you are right now and where you need to go. As Dr. Phil has said, “You choose your behavior. You choose your consequences.”

Taking responsibility means assessing your circumstances. In other words, what are you responsible for? What is the situation you have found yourself in? What is on the line? What are the best and worst outcomes? What role, if any, did you have in creating this situation? Who is responsible for getting you out?

I want to make one thing clear before we dive in: taking responsibility isn’t the same thing as blaming yourself. Forgiveness and responsibility go hand-in-hand in the REACH protocol. You can’t move beyond step one if you don’t forgive yourself for what has happened. No one is perfect, and survival journeys rarely go neatly. You won’t always feel like the hero. Take responsibility for your choices, but don’t dwell in shame.

The goal of this chapter is to help you become accountable, to take responsibility for your survival scenario. When things get ugly, survivors are the first ones to recognize the gravity of the situation and decide they have the tools to fix it. When you get stuck on the side of the mountain, you can’t count on the chopper coming to get you. You will exponentially increase your chances of survival if you put yourself in charge of your rescue. It starts here. Give yourself the best shot you can at survival by taking the REACH framework to heart. And your first step in that process is to take responsibility.
I realize this advice—take responsibility—sounds so simple that it might be tempting to read quickly over this chapter. Don’t. What sounds so easy in theory is incredibly difficult in the heat of the moment. Think about instances in your life when you delayed taking care of a problem. What were the consequences of that delay? While procrastinating about everyday decisions can create complications, delaying decisions in life-or-death situations can make the difference in your survival.

In this chapter you will learn how to overcome that fight-or-flight paralysis. You will also read about how to absorb responsibility for a survival situation that you’ve created or how not to get stuck in resentment if you had no hand in making the mess. Most importantly, you will spend time thinking about the why of survival—who and what do you fight for? Finally, this chapter will briefly touch on the role spirituality plays in survival.

The stories you will read in this chapter—suffering the death of a child, an accident that resulted in traumatic brain injuries, and near starvation after a plane crash—are about people who decided that their fate was in their own hands. They figured out what they could control and what they had to let go. My hope is that their journeys will inspire you to the same belief and help you take responsibility in your everyday struggles.

The Heart Pounds
Before you can take your first step in the REACH framework—namely, taking responsibility—there are three tendencies you need to realize that most people display when confronted with a survival situation. One is to deny the seriousness of the situation you are in or to deny there is a problem at all. The second is to recognize the disaster and to react like a deer in
headlights: that is, freeze. The third is to look to someone else to solve your problems.

Falling victim to either of these responses does not make you a weak person. Both reactions are common and can be explained with a basic understanding of human physiology. In his excellent book *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why*, Laurence Gonzales goes to a lot of trouble to explain why humans faced with crashing planes or charging bears either insist that there is not a problem or decide to do nothing about it.\(^2\) His explanation goes something like this.

As sentient beings with highly aware brains, we spend a lot of time gathering information about how the world around us works. We use that information to create predictive models of our lives. That sounds complicated, but all it means is that we make associations between scenarios and outcomes that allow us to function in our daily lives. For example, if I see rain clouds, I anticipate that water could come from the sky, so I grab an umbrella. If a dog is snarling at me, I don’t pet it. Evolutionarily, this was handy for our Cro-Magnon ancestors as they learned to predict where they could find food or how to evade predators. Establishing mental models of the world was their key to survival.

In the modern world, however, our predictive brains have drawbacks. We build “models” of what we expect our world to look like and can have a hard time changing those models when pieces don’t fit. For example, if we enjoy a local hiking trail and have hiked it a hundred times without seeing a rattlesnake, we establish a model for experiencing the trail that doesn’t have

snakes. Because we are not expecting a snake, if we do come across one, we react in one of two ways. We might not recognize the snake for what it is (we think it’s a tree branch or a shadow) or we might not see it at all. On the other hand, we might see the snake and freeze, helpless against an impending strike. Our snake-free model has failed us.

Both responses have been well documented in studies and survival literature. A tragic example is the behavior of some people in the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. Despite feeling the impact of the planes and receiving evacuation instructions, many people continued to work at their desks. Others displayed a behavior not uncommon among victims of house fires or hurricanes: they began to slowly grab items they wanted to take along, even if it was something as nonsensical as a blank pad of paper. It wasn’t about the utility of the items; their brains were just responding to extreme stress with a rote—and unhelpful—behavior.

These behaviors exist in everyday survival situations as well. How often do you see the parents of an adolescent son or daughter with a substance abuse problem seemingly blind to their child’s increasingly dangerous behavior? And what about the young addicts themselves?

People facing grief, loss, or other issues often experience depression. This is normal. It’s easy for lulls to become permanent or severe, however, if steps aren’t taken to halt your slide. I have seen people become stuck in paralysis and indecision until—eventually, inevitably—they are overcome by more serious issues. Making a decision to work yourself out of a place

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of indecision can come in many forms and might take more than just your own willpower. Working toward survival by using resources such as therapy or support groups is the very definition of taking responsibility.

That being said, it is understandable to resist positive encouragement or an uplifting mentality when you are in the early stages of mourning. Many times, the people around you want so desperately to do something to help get you to the other side. Their pushing, however, can have the opposite effect; you resist, especially if you are mourning. “Let me stay here in this horrible spot, because this is where I need to be. Leave me alone until I’m ready.” This book and well-meaning friends are here when you are ready.

Beyond depression or grief, people “freeze” in their personal lives when a situation becomes overwhelming or intimidating. They cognitively know, for example, that they are undergoing a divorce or that they have created crippling credit card debt for themselves, but they can’t seem to do anything about it. The activation energy to get going just isn’t there.

When people stall out, they tend to look to others to either take responsibility . . . or to take the blame. I got stuck in my divorce when I blamed my ex-wife for the problems we were having. That was a dead-end road. It was on me to take responsibility. Remember: no matter what the situation is, it always comes back to you. You can’t control what is happening to you, but you can control your response.

Putting yourself in the ring for the fight isn’t easy. Moving past denial requires self-awareness and acceptance that your life, literally or figuratively, is on the line. Are you avoiding something? We all do, but hopping off that fence is imperative.

Sometimes the issue isn’t freezing but figuring out where
rock bottom is. At times it’s obvious. You’re stranded on Everest with a storm coming in. Your boat has started to take on water. The divorce papers are in your hand. Whatever it is, the problem that needs solving is obvious and actionable. At other times, though, rock bottom—the moment when you know that your life is what you are fighting for—can catch you unaware.

When life gets hard, you owe it to yourself to stop and do a quick gut-check because of our human tendencies to downplay struggles until they hit a breaking point. Your intuition will tell you if there is a problem as long as you can be vulnerable enough to listen to yourself. Take responsibility. Ask yourself these crucial questions: “How serious is the situation I am in? What is the worst-case scenario that could result from this?” Survival requires that you repeat this mantra: This is happening. What am I going to do about it? Take if from one who knows. The helicopter is crashing, and you can’t sit still, mesmerized by the uncontrolled spinning, any longer.

Life Is Unfair

It might be that you had no part in creating or contributing to your catastrophe. You happened to swim in the ocean the day a shark was spotted in the area, or you had the misfortune to be diagnosed with a serious illness. Alternatively, your survival situation might be a disaster entirely of your own making. (More on that issue in the section below called “We All Make Mistakes.”) Either scenario requires a certain kind of mental fortitude to endure.

If you are a random victim of life’s machinations, it can be easy to get angry. “Why me?”

As I was in the helicopter spinning perilously above the highway the day I was literally being handed my freedom,
the irony was not lost on me. Why was this happening to me, such a qualified and conscientious pilot? And on the very day my life was being handed back to me. I started to get angry. But that was a mindset I had to quickly leave behind. Being mad would only cloud my thinking and waste time. No matter what, I was responsible for using my training and landing the helicopter safely.

Focusing on the injustice of the event and venting your anger is actually not a healthy way of processing life’s ups and downs. Yes, something unfair has happened to you. If there is a loss associated, take time to mourn that loss. But there is no proven scientific benefit of taking a time for complaining. Actually, complaining makes us feel worse. Psychologist Jeffrey Lohr explains it (rather coarsely) this way: “People don’t break wind in elevators more than they have to. Venting anger is similar to emotional farting in a closed area. It sounds like a good idea, but it’s dead wrong.” I agree with him. Don’t get mad; get productive.

Rick Doody, who lost his eighteen-year-old son to a car accident, confesses that dealing with the anger has been challenging. “It’s not healthy. The alternative is to continuously strive to be as positive as you can even if you don’t really feel like it. It takes a lot of work. It’s worth it to fake it sometimes.” Alex’s passing has affected Rick in other ways as well. “I don’t let the little things bother me anymore,” he shares, “I see people getting upset about things so easily, and I just shake my head and think about how little they have to worry about and how much worse it really can be.”

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You heard from my friend Wade Hoag in the foreword to this book. Wade fell from a construction lift and is now confined to a wheelchair for life. (In chapter 6 he talks about how the REACH model characterizes how he’s coped with surviving that loss.) He is nineteen. Nothing he did in his vibrant life merited the cards he was dealt, but he has to face his situation all the same. The cognitive dissonance that results from accepting that he is in a wheelchair while not accepting the implicit limitations of being in a wheelchair is the only way he can get up every morning. This mindset is his way of “accepting responsibility.”

Fixating on unfairness is not an effective strategy for survival; it will stop you from moving forward. You are right; what has happened to you is not fair. But here’s a little tough love: no matter why or how this is happening, you are still accountable for your own survival and the survival of those who are dependent on you. (You’ll read inspiring evidence of this in “Declare Your Dependents” later in the chapter.)

This isn’t the time to focus on what you have lost or the hand life has dealt you. You can’t afford to be angry. It takes some people a long time to get here, but the real progress starts when you can leave the anger and blaming behind. It’s a process; don’t expect to get into a healthy mindset all at once. One of the best ways I can illustrate that point is to share with you the story of my friends Roger and Stefani DePenti.

Stefani Schaefer is an award-winning top anchorwoman with FOX News in Cleveland, affectionately known by her maiden name by thousands of viewers. Roger DePenti decided to work for a successful solar company as a superintendent to learn more about the nuances of the business before he started a similar business of his own.
The happy couple had celebrated their twentieth wedding anniversary in Hawaii, bringing along their two children, Race (eleven) and Siena (nine), to show them where their parents had been married. On April 27, 2012 (just four months after that family vacation), Roger was up on some scaffolding helping his workmen install solar panels on a church when the boards gave way. Roger fell twelve feet to the ground. My wife, Gina, received the horrifying call from Stefani: “Roger is completely nonresponsive.” He had suffered extreme head trauma and been airlifted to Cleveland’s MetroHealth Level I Adult Trauma Center.

Without warning or time to process what had happened, Stefani was rushed to his side and forced to immediately make critical medical decisions for Roger. (Though hesitant to do so, she nevertheless took responsibility, the first step in the REACH protocol.) The doctors could hardly mask their own stress as they
encouraged Stefani to get the kids to the hospital to say a final goodbye to their father. I will never forget the look of disbelief on her face. Gina and I felt helpless to reassure her or give her hope. The situation was horrifying and surreal.

Roger had severe head fractures, brain bleeding, and brain bruising. He was in a coma and was put on a ventilator in the hope that he would miraculously stabilize and the complications would be minimized. Realistically, however, the doctors gave Roger less than a 10 percent chance of survival and warned that the brain damage would likely be devastating even if he did survive.

The first night in the hospital Stefani authorized the doctors to perform a craniectomy; part of his skull was removed to allow his brain to swell without damaging other cranial areas, particularly the brain stem. He survived the first battle. A day later, though, Roger began showing signs of an infection in his brain fluid. That shift from one critical situation to another would come to characterize life for the four DePentis in the never-ending freight train of complications that followed.

We All Make Mistakes
If choices you made are responsible for your disaster, it’s a different story. Maybe you went skiing in whiteout conditions and then you couldn’t find your way back to the lodge. Maybe you were part of an unhealthy relationship dynamic that you didn’t attend to before it became destructive. Maybe you put off that doctor’s appointment even though you knew something wasn’t quite right.

Oftentimes your first reaction can be anger with yourself—“How could I be so dumb?”—or guilt. It’s understandable. Knowing you are responsible for a situation that could end in
your death or the end of life as you know it is unpalatable. But people make mistakes. (Recall that Alexander Pope said, “To err is human.”) If you start reading extreme survival stories, you realize how frequently people make small misjudgments that put them in grave danger. The same is true in our everyday lives.

You do need to take responsibility for what you have done, especially if your choices have affected other people. Your mistake is a learning experience: don’t forget it or repeat it. But in a survival scenario, your culpability is just another factor that needs to be acknowledged and incorporated. Recognize the mistake and then move on so that you can get down to the business of your survival. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this is where forgiveness is key.

Being mad at yourself is just precious energy wasted. This is true for the opposite scenario as well: If others are responsible for having put you in a bad situation, you have to forgive them. If you don’t, the anger will be noise that distracts you from your survival journey.

Research has proven that forgiveness increases your psychological well-being: forgiveness makes you happier, less inclined to be negative, and even physically healthier.\(^5\) If you can’t get to a place of forgiveness at least try to set aside the resentment until you are out of the woods.

One of the survivors I interviewed for this book was US Air Force Colonel Leon F. “Lee” Ellis, retired. (You’ll learn more about him in chapter 5, “Happiness.”) Although he suffered horribly at the hands of his jailers at the Hanoi Hilton during the Vietnam

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War, Lee nevertheless miraculously and wonderfully believes in the power of forgiveness. “Forgiveness is usually grounded in love—and it starts with love for yourself.” As he sees it, wasting his energy hating his captors or the Vietnam War agitators doesn’t do him any good, so he doesn’t engage with it.

Declare Your Dependents

Accepting responsibility for your survival is difficult. You have to decide that all the pain and crap you are going to go through in your quest to survive will be worth the life you have to live once the journey is over. That’s what this book is really about: Why are you going to fight so hard? You must be able to answer this question.

Survival scenarios where nothing is certain, especially the finish line, are the most overwhelming. Taking responsibility for your survival when you can’t see the road ahead is not a natural choice. Yet that’s what a true survival situation is—not knowing the outcome when the stakes are your life. When the likelihood of survival is small and the pain is immense, it can seem easier not to try.

Sometimes the places your survival journey will take you are so dark that it is hard to imagine life being good again. It doesn’t seem worth it to keep going for your own sake. It is in those moments that you must remember the people depending on you.

In my reading and interviews, in both extreme survival stories and the next-door variety, most survivors reported that they chose to keep going because someone was counting on them. At times this was a decision made for a loved one who was not part of the survival scenario but would be irrevocably impacted by the news of the person’s death, like a parent or a child. In
Chris Mintz’s case, he knew that if he died on his son’s birthday the family would forever associate what was supposed to be a day of celebration with grief. Yet, even if he was going to die, he preferred to confront the gunman and risk his life because he envisioned his son remembering his father’s bravery with great pride rather than sorrow.

Just two years ago, my friend Rick Doody (who I introduced earlier in the chapter) was presented with the opposite outcome: a father remembering his son’s achievements with great pride rather than great sorrow. The events unfolded like this.

Alex and three of his high school friends were packed into his SUV, driving back to school on the last day of senior year after lunch and a quick game of basketball at Alex’s house. Three of the teens were star players on the basketball team—Alex was the captain—and the fourth was the captain of the football and lacrosse teams.

Alex had a slight headache and let his friend drive the familiar route. It wasn’t far. But the lightly traveled, hundred-year-old County Line Road tempted its invincible young commuters into pushing the limits. A slight acceleration, then the roller-coaster terrain separated wheels from asphalt as the inexperienced driver fought for control—now sliding sideways off the berm, the passenger side of the car careening through wet spring grass, meeting an abrupt end against one of the many century-old oak trees.

“Take a seat,” Alex’s stricken mother and father were told by the receptionist at the busy ER desk. All they knew was that Alex had been in an accident.

Moments later, an orderly called the two parents by last name and led them to a cramped, generic room just outside the
hectic ER. There they sat—and waited. Time began to slow . . . then stop. Something wasn't right. What was going on? Why weren't they being taken to Alex?

An abrupt knock. A harried doctor rushed in, not making eye contact.

“Are you the parents?” he asked without preamble.

“Yes,” Rick snapped back.

“One of the boys is dead,” the doctor said, as if announcing a basketball score or the time. “Come with me.”

There was nothing for Rick to do but get up. Follow.

Into a two-person emergency room. To their left, doctors and nurses were desperately shouting orders among the beeping monitors. The unknown patient was not responding. To their right was a lonely gurney, and on it lay a body, still, a clunky intubation tube blocking and distorting its facial features. Rick’s myopic view began to widen as adrenaline pumped into his senses. It couldn't be . . . Alex? Alex!

He stumbled back to the generic room where his ex-wife waited and told her the news. She screamed.

It was many months before Rick could begin to describe Alex's passing, how it affected him and how he managed to keep going. He needed time to grieve, as well as time to understand how sharing the experience would be meaningful. “I only want to talk about this if maybe someone else can be helped from my experience. If someone had told me that my son was going to be killed when he was eighteen years old, I would have said my life was over. But, somehow my life continues.”

Rick is a recovering alcoholic and just celebrated twenty-five years of sobriety. He is very active in the local AA community, attending meetings regularly and acting as a sponsor. “I would
have been worried about falling back into that trap, but I have too much to live for,” he says. For him, finding the purpose of his life is obvious. “I do it because I have two daughters and a woman I love and many friends whom I live for. I take responsibility for moving ahead for them.”

Rick vacillates between feeling extremely angry and “ripped off” about the loss of Alex to feeling so grateful for his two daughters. The younger one, Charlotte, is set to attend Cornell next year, the school where Alex would now be a freshman on the basketball team. Wandering the campus with Charlotte for her orientation visit was extremely difficult. He had made the same walk a year ago with Alex.

Rick takes responsibility for working hard everyday to uphold Alex’s legacy, to cherish his daughters, and to proactively and consciously enjoy his friends and family—all the while struggling to accept this uninvited tragedy. Instead of succumbing to the tragedy, he fiercely fights for rich meaning. For many of us, the passing of a child would be our worst nightmare materialized. How could you go on? Rick has found a way.

In other cases, that sense of responsibility for others can even be for people who are not alive. Nando Parrado was a survivor of the famous Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571 plane crash in the Andes on October 13, 1972. The plane was carrying members of a Uruguayan rugby team, and of the original forty-five passengers, only sixteen survived the ordeal. Some died immediately from the impact of the crash; others perished later from injuries, exposure, and starvation.

I had the pleasure of hosting him for a couple of days as he was preparing to give a talk to my local chapter of the Young Presidents’ Organization (YPO). Hearing about his experiences created a lasting impression on me. Moreover, his demeanor,
confidence, and poise struck me as something I needed and wanted to learn more about. I found Nando to be the most pleasant, altruistic, and confident person I had ever met. He was so comfortable with himself; he radiated serenity, which made him very charismatic and easy to be around.

In his memoir, *Miracle in the Andes* (which was also made into a major motion picture), Nando writes that as he was stranded on the side of the mountain in the midst of the wreckage facing what felt like certain death, he decided he needed to put his life in order to honor the victims of the crash.6 If he did

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not live there would be no one to tell their story. Nando also felt responsible for his father back home. His mother and sister had perished in the crash, and Nando knew that he was now all his father had left.

He hunkered down for seventy-two days on the mountain before deciding that no one was coming to their rescue. Nando and another crash survivor, Roberto Canessa, spent the next ten days—through sheer determination and bravery—trekking through the Andes before finding someone who could alert the authorities and create a rescue mission to bring back the other survivors. As he was struggling out of the mountains, Nando explained to me: “I couldn’t speak because my body was consuming itself to survive, and my esophagus was being eaten by my stomach acids. I thought of my father alone and pushed for another step.”

Similarly, thoughts of being reunited with his wife motivated acclaimed author, psychologist, and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl. In 1942, Viktor and his immediate family (including his new wife) were moved to the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where they would remain for several years until Viktor was sent to an offshoot of Dachau and his wife to Bergen-Belsen. Viktor witnessed unspeakable atrocities during this time and was pushed past the accepted limits of human resilience. His survival came down to the hope that he would see his wife again and finish the manuscript that he fervently wished to see published.

Of the two dreams, only one was realized. In 1945, Viktor was liberated from the camps but he discovered that his wife had been killed at Bergen-Belsen. He finished his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, which describes his experiences as a prisoner in the camps while also examining the experience from a
psychologist’s viewpoint. He notes that there was a fundamental difference between those who survived life in the concentration camps and those who didn’t: the people who made it had something or someone to live for. For Viktor, it was his wife and his book. For others, it was a child or a friend.

I think his observation is still true today. All survivors have someone or something they are fighting for. For me, it was my girlfriend (now wife) Gina and my sons. If you don’t feel like you have something worth fighting for, then it becomes your responsibility to create that meaning. The people who don’t make it are the ones who have no purpose.

People who have no purpose often fall victim to behaviors like alcoholism, inertia, or extremism. Purpose is fundamental to survival. It’s not enough to want to survive; you have to know why surviving is so important to you. While we are hard-wired for survival, when the darkest moments come, you will need the extra motivation that purpose gives you to get up and keep trying. Know the value of your life beyond what you can accomplish for yourself. Who depends on you? Who needs you? Who loves you? Who else loses if you can’t live a full and purpose-driven life?

Your Spiritual Framework

In almost every survival journey discussed in this book, there is a spiritual element to the journey. For some people, this is founded in traditional religion. For others, it’s a much less rigid spiritual “responsibility to survive.”

This book is meant to give you a framework for survival that you fill in with your own beliefs and motivations. I am not here to provide answers to anyone’s questions about a higher
power or salvation. In that spirit, whatever spiritual mantra you choose (or don’t choose) can be adapted to the REACH protocol. My one caution to you is that placing your fate in the hands of a higher power or luck doesn’t absolve you from a responsibility to be vigilant about your survival. There’s no free ticket, so to speak.

I grew up in an extremely Christian region of the country where I heard this saying a lot: Give your problems to God. That’s not a bad stance, but I found that sometimes people used it as an excuse to stop taking responsibility for their problems. This is not a good strategy. Giving your problems to your higher power doesn’t absolve you of the responsibility to actively solve your problems.

I once heard a parable that went like this:

There was a devout man who lived in a region prone to flooding. A horrible storm had been forecast to hit his town, and an evacuation order was given. Instead of evacuating, the man decided he would stay put. God would take care of him.

His neighbors drove by his house, begging him to come with them. There was room in their car. “I’m staying here,” the man said, trusting that God would take care of him.

The flooding started, quickly filling the street and then rising to his doorstep. Soon his house was flooded.

A police boat came through. “Come with us,” urged the policeman. “The water will only rise higher.”

Again the man declined. “I’m fine,” he said. “Help someone who really needs it.”

Soon the man was forced to climb onto his roof. A
rescue helicopter flew overhead and he heard over the loudspeaker someone shouting, “We’re throwing down a ladder! Climb on and we’ll take you away!”

The man shook his head and waved them off. God would save him, he thought, if he really needed help.

The flooding got worse and worse. The man’s home was swept away, and he perished.

As he stood at the pearly gates, he scolded God. “Why didn’t you save me?”

“I tried,” said God. “I sent you a warning. I sent your neighbors. I sent the police boat. And I sent the helicopter. What more did you want?”

Whatever religion or belief you are calling on, remember that you are in the fight too. Spirituality is meant to buoy and empower you when things get ugly, but you must still show up.

When the bomb goes off, literally or figuratively, you will not be thinking clearly. It is human nature to minimize the problem, deny the problem, or look for someone else to solve the problem for you. But every minute you spend in denial or being ticked off at the world or yourself for putting you in this situation, you lose precious time and energy that could be spent on surviving the trauma.

You are responsible for the turnaround. Accept what has happened and decide that you can fix it. Forgive yourself for your mistakes. Remember what you are surviving for: yourself, a loved one, a better life, or some important unfinished business. If you know why you have to keep going, taking that first step is infinitely easier.
Make your survival journey about more than just your own outcome. Maybe it’s a cause (telling the stories of those who perished) or a person (a child, parent, or partner—even a pet). Your life will take on a greater importance. You will find the strength to keep getting up even when you most want to quit.