

# Wiblin's Checklist

Rob Wiblin of 80,000 Hours recently shared some deeply helpful advice for coping with the vicissitudes of life. None of it would surprise Epicurus or the Stoics, but Rob's version is more concise and accessible. Here's the whole thing, reprinted with his permission.

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When bad things happen in life, the thoughts we have about them have a big impact on how much they harm us. Here's a checklist of thoughts I work down to make setbacks feel less painful, which may help you too.

It's basically CBT, but less effort because some of the work is already done:

1. Is this actually going to materially hurt me over any significant period of time? If not, maybe I shouldn't be too upset.
2. Is there some hidden upside I haven't noticed yet? How could this actually end up being beneficial?
3. Is this misfortune funny or ironic in some way? For example, is it either completely typical or totally unexpected in an amusing way? If I'm catastrophising, are my extravagant misinterpretations themselves kind of funny? Would I see the funny side if it happened to a stranger? (BTW life is a hilarious tragicomedy, 4/5 stars.)
4. Is this the kind of bad thing I should've anticipated, and so have already built into how I feel about the world?
5. Could something even worse have happened that didn't? Are there other people who've ended up even worse off than me, which make me look lucky, if anything?
6. What unexpected good things have happened to me lately, that offset my bad luck in this case?
7. What would I say to someone else if this happened to them? Presumably not "I suggest you... feel bad" .
8. Do I endorse the position that everyone in the world who encounters a situation of this kind should be sad? If not, why should I be sad? I should not.
9. What can I learn from this situation that will make me better off, by preventing the same or worse in future?
10. If all the above fails, do I have the strength to get through this tragedy? Almost certainly, yes. Have I gotten through something similarly bad in the past? Almost certainly, yes. Am I still distressed by similar misfortunes from the past? Almost certainly not - in which case, why be distressed about this now?

There's also a special list for times I feel someone has wronged me:

1. Can I see a way that what they've done would have been reasonable from their point of

view?

2. Is there any way of interpreting their behaviour that doesn't imply that they were inconsiderate or mean-spirited? For example, maybe they didn't know some relevant information, or foresee this outcome? Or just got unlucky?

3. Yes people are dumb & make mistakes. S\*\*\* happens. Get over it.

3. Has this person done any nice things for me that help to offset the harm they've done here?

4. Have I ever wronged someone similarly, by accident, or through selfishness? Yes. Is this person actually less considerate than me, all things considered? 50/50 they aren't.

5. If the above fails, can I just avoid this person in future and pay them no further mind?

Hopefully!

I often forget most of these in the moment, but a few I do as an automatic reflex, and they're very helpful.