

# Ask Dr. K®: Writings For Your Mental Health

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## HOW NOT TO BE VULNERABLE

Dear Dr. K.,

My friend and I were discussing how sensitive we both can be to things with this sometimes leading to our getting emotionally hurt. My friend's philosophy is to be 'tough' and not let things (or people) get to her. She says she's happier that way but it dawns on me that she is missing out on so much of life...especially in her relationships.

Is there any way we can protect ourselves from being vulnerable to the various things life can throw at us?

Lindsey M., Tampa

Dear Lindsey,

The answer to your perceptive question is easy: yes...we can protect ourselves and no, we cannot. How's that for "psycho-simplicity?" Please dare to read on.

We are, just by living everyday, vulnerable to the random things life can throw at us, things we cannot control or protect ourselves from. There is a scare right now about a virus that can go around the world and make us sick or even kill us, we can get suddenly ill from something (a blood clot, a birth defect we did not know about), have a hurricane hit us, be in an accident which changes our life, or come home to a house that has been broken into or an airplane can fall out of the sky on top of us. We can be careful, but bad things happen to nice people.

Of course, you can try to avoid life as much as possible and give ourselves the illusion that we are safe. We can be tentative about things, never make too many decisions or changes in our lives, stay at home and do everything the 'right' way. This way, we can trick ourselves into thinking that if we are doing everything 'right' and not making waves, we think we are safe. To a certain degree, this is true but we still are not altogether protected from the random things like I mentioned above. And not many people would agree that hiding in the shadows is really living like your friend who things remaining aloof from people and life will protect her from being hurt. She is certainly right—if she stays apart from people (it sounds like she was hurt herself), she can remain free of being injured emotionally. But is she really living?

The more we are involved with life, the more exposed we become. As we grow older, we are vulnerable to become ill; as we love, we are vulnerable to rejection or loss or simply hurting when we are not with the one we love; if we have children, they may die before us. If we take a job or move, things may not work out and we feel dumb. If we were really 'smart,' we would never fall in love, have a friendship, take a job or go into business—then we would be 'safe.'

So, there are the random things in life that happen. We all are vulnerable to them and we all hope none of them happen to us. We cannot protect ourselves there. But how can we protect ourselves?

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There is an old Buddhist saying that goes "Life is unfair. When we accept that, it is unfair no longer." What I believe this saying means is that when we acknowledge that unfair things happen and that we, as human beings, are vulnerable and have only the illusion of control in our lives, it is then that we are freed up from the fears of being hurt and can trust in ourselves to live more fully.

Mark Twain said: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

We all are vulnerable but that should not hold us back in fear of making choices that make us more fully alive.

Dr. K.

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Dr. K is Stan Kapuchinski, M.D., a board-certified psychiatrist still practicing in Punta Gorda, FL. For an appointment or if you have questions, please email him at [DrK@StopYourMisery.com](mailto:DrK@StopYourMisery.com). Dr. K.'s book, ***Say Goodbye To Your PDI (Personality Disordered Individual), Recognize People Who Make You Miserable and Eliminate Them From Your Life for Good!*** is available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Barnes & Noble Booksellers](http://Barnes & Noble Booksellers), and [HCI Books](http://HCI Books). Visit his website: [www.StopYourMisery.com](http://www.StopYourMisery.com)

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