

Life After Les Miz

by Keith U.

The completion of a successful musical theater run is stressful and can be emotionally devastating. Thespians may experience a wide range of emotions, even when the end of the musical's run is expected.

Many report initially experiencing a sense of numbness and loss of purpose, and it is not uncommon to find cast members doing hair and makeup and showing up at the venue at the appropriate call time notwithstanding the fact that the theatre is locked.

Coping is vital to your mental health. There are many ways to cope effectively with your life after a *Les Miserables* run, and everyone is different, but here are some things that have helped others work through the process.

1. Pour your surplus creative energy into finishing that *Les Miserables / Okalahoma!* mashup you've been working on[1].
2. Buy a half dozen helium balloons and TikTok *Bring Him Home* without falsetto.
3. Lock and unlock your phone by entering "24601" over and over while rocking gently back and forth (with and without humming *Castle on a Cloud*).
4. Block the entire show on your dining room table using Legos®.
5. Fight call, fight call, fight call. (Consider telling the other people you involve what it is you're doing, first.)
6. Ask people politely to focus on the ten out of eleven times you hastily exited stage left *without* running into the wall, thank you very much.
7. Stand in a walk-in closet with the lights off and door closed and practice not talking in the wings.

8. Review all the lines and lyrics to every successful musical Gulfshore Playhouse Education has not done yet, paying particular attention to the ones you don't know as well. Like *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *The Producers*. Because let's face it, you know *Phantom* cold, and if you don't were you even in *Les Miz*?

9. Sit somewhere comfortable and quiet, close your eyes, and ask yourself, "What is Austin feeling right now?"

Remember, coping is a process that takes time. Healing happens gradually — it can't be forced or hurried — and there is no "normal" timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. The loss will never go away, but many find they are emotionally ready to immerse themselves in the next project much sooner than expected. Without rushing yourself or getting too far out of your comfort zone, consider auditioning for other productions even if you don't feel "ready."

You will never have this experience again, but this one cannot be taken away from you and there will be others.

[1] Hoedown, hoedown
There's dancing in the barn
Hoedown, hoedown
A party on the farm

