

# RESILIENCE



## The Art of Resilience

### **What is Resilience?**

Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes. In a nutshell, resilience can be defined as the ability – and tendency – to “bounce back.”

### **What’s the Meaning of “Bouncing Back”?**

“Bouncing Back” is what we do when we face disappointment, defeat, and failure, but instead of wallowing or letting things keep us down, we get back up and continue on with our lives. It’s the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.

Resilience isn’t about floating through life on a breeze, or skating by all of life’s many challenges unscathed; rather, it’s about experiencing all of the negative, difficult, and distressing events that life throws at you and staying on task, optimistic, and high-functioning. In fact, developing resilience basically *requires* emotional distress. If we never ran into disappointment or distress in the first place, we would never learn how to deal with it.

### **Why is Being Resilient so Important?**

You hear a lot about growing and developing resilience – in adults, teenagers and in children – for good reason. Following you will find a list of a few of the wide range of reasons that resilience is a great trait to have:

- Greater resilience leads to improved learning and academic achievement.
- Resilience is related to lower absences from work or school due to sickness.
- It contributes to reduced risk-taking behaviors including excessive drinking, smoking, and use of drugs.
- Those with greater resilience tend to be more involved in the community and/or family activities.
- Higher resilience is related to increased physical health.

### **Overall Health**

Although every point in the above list is a good reason to pay attention to resilience, the last one may be most important of all. Resilience has a powerful impact on our health (and vice versa, in some ways). A recent review of the research on resilience suggests that resilience leads or contributes to many different positive health outcomes, including:

- The experience of more positive emotions and better regulation of negative emotions.
- Less depressive symptoms.
- Ability to cope with stress: through enhanced problem-solving, a positive orientation, and re-evaluation of stressors.
- Successful aging and improved sense of well-being despite age-related challenges.
- Better management of symptoms related to trauma.

- Resilience boosts immune system functioning.

Resilient people are able to better manage negative emotions and experience more positive emotions, which leads to objectively good health outcomes.

### **How do we develop resilience?**

The most effective way to develop resilience is through life experiences, being aware of the opportunities for self-development and the courage to take advantage of them. Self-learned resilience, as the name implies, is the resilience that you build up in yourself through concerted effort. There are many ways to build up your own reserve of self-learned resilience. Below are just a few ways to go about it:

- Using a loss or stressful event to grow.
- Allow yourself to feel a wide range of emotions.
- Identify your support system and let them be there for you.
- Be mindful of your wellness and self-care.
- Find a sense of purpose in your life, which will help boost you up on difficult days.
- Develop a strong social network of people who support you and who you can confide in.
- Embrace change as the inevitability that it is, and be ready for it.
- Be optimistic—you don't need to ignore your problems, just understand that it's all temporary and that you have what it takes to make it through.
- Nurture yourself with healthy, positive self-care—get enough sleep, eat well, and exercise.
- Process your emotions with the help of a therapist or counselor.
- Build positive beliefs in your abilities to help you increase your self-esteem.
- Develop your problem-solving skills through strategies like making a list of potential ways to solve your current problem.
- Establish reasonable goals by brainstorming solutions and breaking them down into manageable steps.
- Take action to solve problems rather than waiting for the problem to solve itself.
- Practice self-compassion: try to be mindful, remind yourself that you're not alone, and be kind to yourself.
- Cultivate forgiveness.

And remember: Keep working on your skills; please don't get discouraged if it takes a while to get to the level of resilience you desire.

### **Raising Children to Be Resilient**

If you're a parent or a dedicated teacher or another important adult in a child's life, you might be wondering what you can do now to help your child grow up with resilience. Give these ideas a try:

- Help your child make connections with others to help them build empathy, grow their support network, and encourage resilience.
- Encourage your child to help others, which can help them feel empowered.
- Maintain a daily routine to give young children a sense of safety and structure in their lives, and encourage them to develop their own routines.
- Take a break, and teach your child how to take a break; show him or her that excessive worrying is unproductive and can be harmful, and encourage him or her to set aside what they are worried about at least once in a while.
- Teach your child self-care, including eating healthy, exercising, getting a good amount of sleep, and having downtime to just relax and have fun.
- Help your child set reasonable goals and move toward them, one step at a time; this will help him or her to focus on what they have accomplished rather than what they haven't accomplished.
- Nurture a positive self-view in your child by reminding him or her of the ways he or she has successfully handled difficulties and hardships in the past, and connect their past success with their future potential.

- Help your child keep things in perspective and encourage a long-term view—especially when he or she is stuck on something negative right now.
- Look for opportunities for self-discovery for your child, and show him or her how to do the same.

Last but not the least: teach your child (ren) to accept that change is an inevitable part of living.

**In summary:**

Resilience is having the ability to recover from difficulties, challenges, stressful times and change. Although you might read about resilience and think that it applies to only the most inspiring, impressive, and awesome among us, resilience is surprisingly common. It is easy to see that we all display some pretty impressive resilience. Some of us are more resilient than others, but we have all experienced challenges, stressful events or adversity at some point in our lives; however, we kept going—and here we are today: stronger, more experienced and better equipped to keep “bouncing back”.

**Keep on bouncing!**

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