

Thinking about resilience

What is resilience?

The ability to:

- recover quickly from unexpected events, change or misfortune;
- create mental buoyancy and positivity to cope well
- to remain positive even in difficulty and setbacks

Factors in Resilience

A combination of factors contributes to resilience. Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having **caring and supportive relationships** within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models, and offer encouragement and reassurance help bolster a person's resilience.

Several additional factors are associated with resilience, including:

1. The capacity to make realistic plans for yourself and take steps to carry them out.
2. Building and actively holding on to a positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
3. Skills in communication and problem solving.
4. The capacity to manage (channel) strong feelings and impulses in constructive ways.

All of these are factors that people can develop in themselves.

10 Ways to build resilience

1. **Make connections.** Good relationships with close family members, work mates, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in groups, faith-based organisations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.
2. **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.** You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations. Focus on these.
3. **Accept that change is a part of living.** Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Life changes. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter. Accepting a new normal and searching for positives within a new normal can help.
4. **Move toward your goals.** Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly -- even if it seems like a small accomplishment -- that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?" Reward yourself for taking small steps.

5. **Take decisive actions.** Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions that cut through rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away. Take charge of what you can take charge of.
6. **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with change or loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life. Find the learning that life is making available to you.
7. **Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
8. **Keep things in perspective.** Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion. On a scale of 1-10, how tough is it? Will it matter in a weeks time? Are you sweating the small stuff? Knowing what is most important to you and filtering out the noise is key.
9. **Maintain a hopeful outlook.** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear. Virtues such as hope, optimism and faith are hugely powerful when activated consistently - especially within teams.
10. **Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Do what you need to do to be well. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly - preferably with a positive friend. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.

For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings in a daily journal to keep on top of life. Others use the arts, gardening, time in nature, meditation and spiritual practices help some people and restore self and build empowering connections.

Common aspect of activities that are renewing include

- Solitude and reflective contemplation
- Relaxation
- Pleasure
- Contrast from daily demands, places and activities.