THE ROAD TO RESILIENCE

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WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. People commonly demonstrate resilience. One example is the response of many Americans to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and individuals' efforts to rebuild their lives.

Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress. Emotional pain and sadness are common in people who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives. In fact, the road to resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional distress.

Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.

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:

The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out. A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities. Skills in communication and problem solving. The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.
All of these are factors that people can develop in themselves.

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE

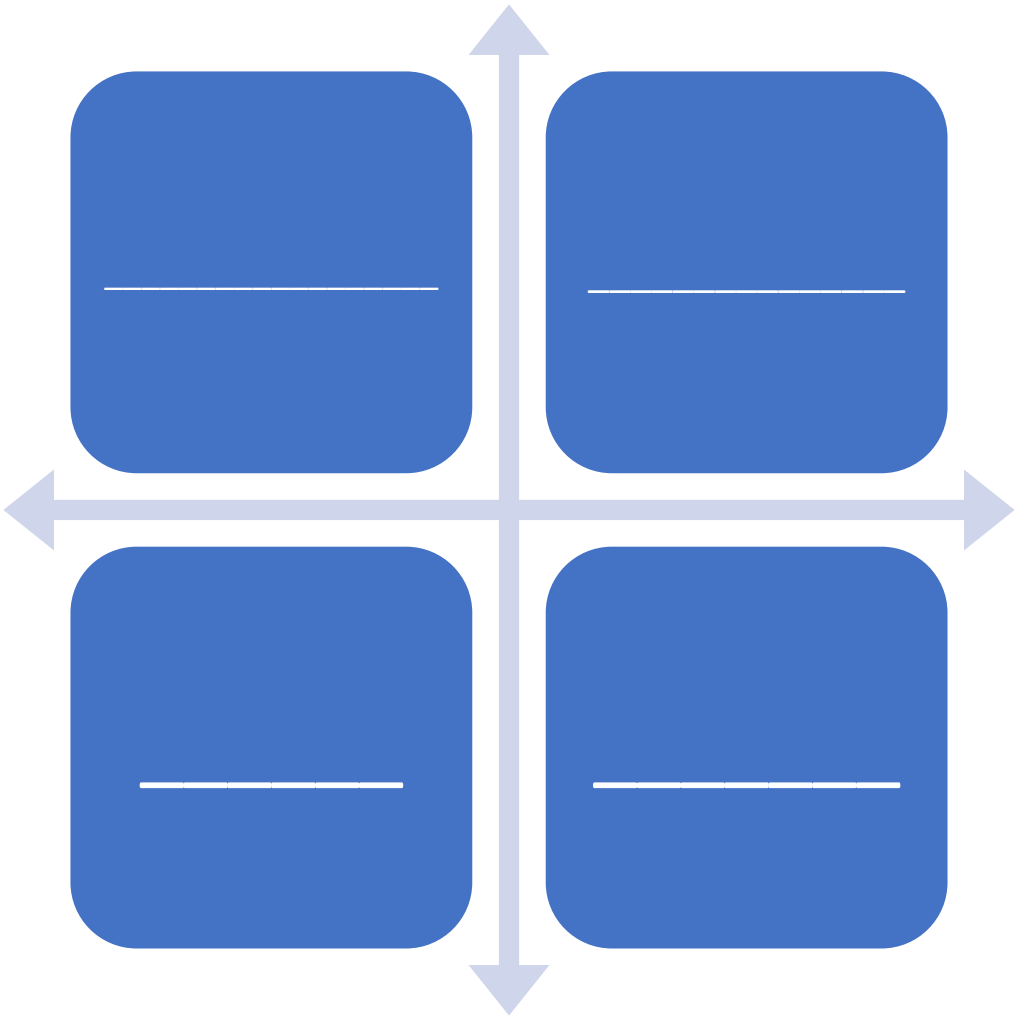
Developing resilience is a personal journey. People do not all react the same to traumatic and stressful life events. An approach to building resilience that works for one person might not work for another. People use varying strategies.

Some variation may reflect cultural differences. A person's culture might have an impact on how he or she communicates feelings and deals with adversity — for example, whether and how a person connects with significant others, including extended family members and community resources. With growing cultural diversity, the public has greater access to a number of different approaches to building resilience.

Some or many of the ways to build resilience in the following pages may be appropriate to consider in developing your personal strategy.



To begin this process complete the chart. Identify 4 skills/people/coping mechanisms that you currently can find strength in when feeling depleted or in crisis. As you grow in this journey you will develop and discover many more ways to build resiliance.

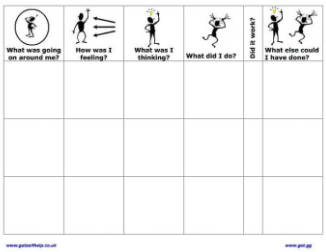


10 WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE

1. Make connections. Good relationships with close family members, 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 civic groups, faith-based organizations, 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. *Behavior activation, community engagement, mending broken relationships (Genogram. Ecomap)



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. *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy ABC Worksheet, Daily Thought Log, Challenging Negative Thoughts, Counterstatements Activity, Mood chart



3. Accept that change is a part of living. Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.*Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Chapter 2 exercises: Accept What you Cannot Change, Acceptance is Not Resignation, Doesn't Mean you Fail, Acceptance is a Posture

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?" *Goal Setting, Treatment Planning, I "USTA" exercise



5. Take decisive actions. Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away. *Assertive Communication Training, distress tolerance ACCEPTS, and



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 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.



7. Nurture a positive view of yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience. **See Core Values Exercise*



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. **CBT: Unhelpful Thinking Patterns, Thought Log*



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. **Mindfulness Strategies, Vision Board Activity, Being Present, Leaning into the fear.*



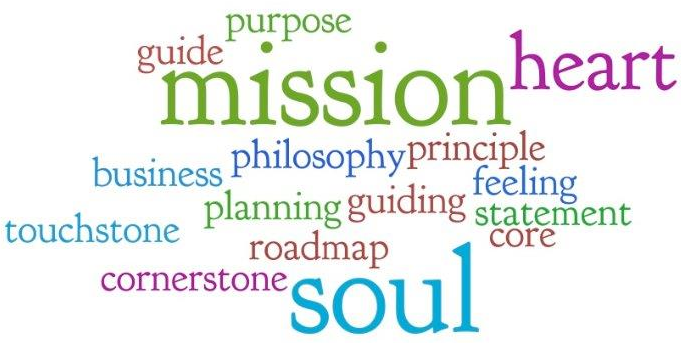
10. Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience. *Wellness Coaching; Sleep hygiene, nutrition, exercise, budgeting, spiritual growth, Wellness Wheel



Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful. For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events in their life. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.

The key is to identify ways that are likely to work well for you as part of your own personal strategy for fostering resilience.

Write a resiliency mission statement for your life below to kickstart your life journey.



"To live each day with… (choose 1-2 values or principles)	
"so that…" (what living by these values will give you)	
"I will do this by…" (specific behaviors, goals, tasks you will use to live by these values)	

LEARN FROM YOUR PAST

Focusing on past experiences and sources of personal strength can help you learn about what strategies for building resilience might work for you. By exploring answers to the following questions about yourself and your reactions to challenging life events, you may discover how you can respond effectively to difficult situations in your life.
Consider the following:

What kinds of events have been most stressful for me?

- ✓ How have those events typically affected me?
- ✓ Have I found it helpful to think of important people in my life when I am distressed?
- ✓ To whom have I reached out for support in working through a traumatic or stressful experience?
- ✓ What have I learned about myself and my interactions with others during difficult times?
- ✓ Has it been helpful for me to assist someone else going through a similar experience?
- ✓ Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?
- ✓ What has helped make me feel more hopeful about the future?

Journal Page: Use this page to make notes and jot down thoughts positive or negative.

STAYING FLEXIBLE

Resilience involves maintaining flexibility and balance in your life as you deal with stressful circumstances and traumatic events. This happens in several ways, including:

Letting yourself experience strong emotions, and also realizing when you may need to avoid experiencing them at times in order to continue functioning. Stepping forward and taking action to deal with your problems and meet the demands of daily living, and also stepping back to rest and reenergize yourself. Spending time with loved ones to gain support and encouragement, and also nurturing yourself. Relying on others, and also relying on yourself.

Getting help when you need it is crucial in building your resilience. Beyond caring family members and friends, people often find it helpful to turn to:

Self-help and support groups. Such community groups can aid people struggling with hardships such as the death of a loved one. By sharing information, ideas and emotions, group participants can assist one another and find comfort in knowing that they are not alone in experiencing difficulty. Books and other publications by people who have successfully managed adverse situations such as surviving cancer. These stories can motivate readers to find a strategy that might work for them personally. Online resources. Information on the web can be a helpful source of ideas, though the quality of information varies among sources.
For many people, using their own resources and the kinds of help listed above may be sufficient for building resilience. At times, however, an individual might get stuck or have difficulty making progress on the road to resilience.

A licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist can assist people in developing an appropriate strategy for moving forward. It is important to get professional help if you feel like you are unable to function or perform basic activities of daily living as a result of a traumatic or other stressful life experience. Different people tend to be comfortable with somewhat different styles of interaction. A person should feel at ease and have good rapport in working with a mental health professional or participating in a support group.

CONTINUING ON YOUR JOURNEY

To help summarize several of the main points in this brochure, think of resilience as similar to taking a raft trip down a river. On a river, you may encounter rapids, turns, slow water and shallows. As in life, the changes you experience affect you differently along the way. In traveling the river, it helps to have knowledge about it and past experience in dealing with it. Your journey should be guided by a plan, a strategy that you consider likely to work well for you. Perseverance and trust in your ability to work your way around boulders and other obstacles are important. You can gain courage and insight by successfully navigating your way through white water. Trusted companions who accompany you on the journey can be especially helpful for dealing with rapids, upstream currents and other difficult stretches of the river. You can climb out to rest alongside the river. But to get to the end of your journey, you need to get back in the raft and continue.

TIP #1: LET YOURSELF FEEL LOUSY EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.

TIP #2: KNOW THAT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN CONTROL YOUR FATE.

TIP #3: RECHARGE WITH A WORKOUT.

TIP #4: DON'T SET UNREALISTIC GOALS.

TIP #5: EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.

Source: Psychology Today

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Information contained in this brochure should not be used as a substitute for professional health and mental health care or consultation. Individuals who believe they may need or benefit from care should consult a psychologist or other licensed health/mental health professional.

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American Psychological Association

APA, located in Washington, D.C., is the leading scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA works to advance psychology as a science and profession and as a means of promoting health and human welfare.

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