

10 Ways to Improve Your Resilience

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Resilience refers to how well you can deal with and bounce back from the difficulties of life. It can mean the difference between handling pressure and losing your cool. Resilient people tend to maintain a more positive outlook and cope with stress more effectively. Research has shown that while some people seem to come by resilience naturally, these behaviors can also be learned.

Whether you're going through a tough time now or you want to be prepared for the next one, here are 10 techniques you can focus on in order to foster your own resilience.

1. Find a Sense of Purpose in Your Life

After her 13-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver who was freshly out of jail on bail for another hit-and-run drunk driving accident, Candace Lightner founded Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Upset by the driver's light sentence, Lightner decided to focus her energy on creating awareness of the dangers of drunk driving. "I promised myself on the day of Cari's death that I would fight to make this needless homicide count for something positive in the years ahead," she later explained.

In the face of crisis or tragedy, finding a sense of purpose can play an important role in your recovery. This might mean becoming involved in your community, cultivating your spirituality, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you.

2. Build Positive Beliefs in Your Abilities

Research has demonstrated that your self-esteem plays an important role in coping with stress and recovering from difficult events. Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments.

When you hear negative comments in your head, practice immediately replacing them with positive ones, such as, "I can do this," "I'm a great friend/mother/partner," or "I'm good at my job."

Becoming more confident in your own abilities, including your ability to respond to and deal with a crisis, is a great way to build resilience for the future.

3. Develop a Strong Social Network

It's important to have people you can confide in. Having to care, supportive people around you act as a protective factor during times of crisis.

While simply talking about a situation with a friend or loved one won't make your troubles go away, it allows you to share your feelings, get support, receive positive feedback, and come up with possible solutions to your problems.

4. Embrace Change

Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. By learning how to be more adaptable, you'll be better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis.

Resilient people often utilize these events as an opportunity to branch out in new directions. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes, highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and thrive.

5. Be Optimistic

Staying optimistic during dark periods can be difficult, but maintaining a hopeful outlook is an important part of resiliency.

Positive thinking does not mean ignoring the problem in order to focus on positive outcomes. It means understanding that setbacks are temporary and that you have the skills and abilities to combat the challenges you face. What you are dealing with may be difficult, but it's important to remain hopeful and positive about a brighter future.

6. Nurture Yourself

When you're stressed, it can be all too easy to neglect your own needs. Losing your appetite, ignoring exercise, and not getting enough sleep are all common reactions to a crisis situation.

Focus on building your self-nurturance skills, even when you're troubled. Make time for activities that you enjoy. By taking care of your own needs, you can boost your overall health and resilience and be fully ready to face life's challenges.

7. Develop Your Problem-Solving Skills

Research suggests that people who are able to come up with solutions to a problem are better able to cope with problems than those who cannot. Whenever you encounter a new challenge, make a quick list of some of the potential ways you could solve the problem.

Experiment with different strategies and focus on developing a logical way to work through common problems. By practicing your problem-solving skills on a regular basis, you will be better prepared to cope when a serious challenge emerges.

8. Establish Goals

Crisis situations are daunting. They may even seem insurmountable. Resilient people are able to view these situations in a realistic way and then set reasonable goals to deal with the problem.

When you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by a situation, take a step back to simply assess what is before you. Brainstorm possible solutions, and then break them down into manageable steps.

9 Take Action to Solve Problems

Simply waiting for a problem to go away on its own only prolongs the crisis. Instead, start working on resolving the issue immediately. While there may not be any fast or simple solution, you can take steps toward making your situation better and less stressful.

Focus on the progress that you have made thus far and planning your next steps, rather than becoming discouraged by the amount of work that still needs to be accomplished. Being active in working on solutions will also help you feel more in control, rather than sitting back and letting life happen to you.

10. Keep Working on Your Skills

Resilience may take time to build, so don't get discouraged if you still struggle to cope with problematic events. Everyone can learn to be resilient and it doesn't involve any specific set of behaviors or actions. Resilience can vary dramatically from one person to the next.

Focus on practicing these skills, as well as the common characteristics of resilient people, but also remember to build on your existing strengths.