

## **Resilience: The Quality of Survival**

Resilience is the inner strength, that certain something that enables some people to thrive through hardship that would destroy others. Resilience isn't a "some have it, some don't quality. It's a skill. Within each person there is a capacity for resilience - the ability to turn loss into gain. To be strengthened by and even transformed by adversity. The effects of combat stress and trauma can chip away at this. You are in a slump that feels never ending. Resilience is the ability to deal well with stress, adversity and trauma. It is a skill that can be developed if worked at. It will not erase or change your problems. But instead give you the ability to find something positive that will sustain you and help you in the future.

Resilience does not mean that you deny or forget what has happened. It does not mean you wall off your feelings and just "tough it out." It means that you are open to reaching out to others and growing in new ways. It ignites your drive to recover and enables you to thrive in the midst of agony and hardship. Resilience can be your personal roadmap that inspires you to keep going.

### **The Road to Resilience**

#### **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 strengthen 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.

#### **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 you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

#### **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 may help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

#### **Move toward your goals.**

Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly – even if it seems like a small accomplishment – that enables you to move towards 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?"

**Take decisive actions.**

Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive action, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would go away.

**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 struggles with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardships have reported better relationships; greater sense of strength even when feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.

**Nurture a positive view of your self.**

Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

**Keep things in perspective.**

Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stress situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.

**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.

**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.

**Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.**

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.

*Reprinted from the American Psychological Association Help Center, 2004.*