



HEALTH AT A GLANCE

The Road to Resilience

Why Some People are Stronger, Smarter and More Skillful at Handling Life's Difficulties...and How You Can Be, Too!

How do people deal with difficult events that change their lives? The death of a loved one, the loss of a job, a serious illness, terrorist attacks: these are all examples of very challenging life experiences. Many people react to such circumstances with a flood of strong emotions and a sense of uncertainty, yet they generally adapt well over time to these life-changing or stressful situations. What enables them to do so? It involves resilience, an ongoing process that requires time and effort.

What is Resiliency?

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress - it means "bouncing back better" from difficult experiences. As you might imagine, building resilience when recovering from a trauma or injury like a broken hip requires more than doing the right kinds of exercise. There's a mind-body-spirit connection that is just as important.

Resilience, Like a Muscle, Grows Stronger with Effort

Experts say a person can build resilience at any stage of life. Here are a few suggestions, excerpted and modified from the American Psychological Association website.

Make Connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends and others are important anytime, but especially following a misfortune or setback. Accepting help and support from those who care and listen will strengthen resilience.

Avoid Seeing Crises as Insurmountable Problems. You can't change the fact that bad things happen, but you can change how you respond to those events. Try looking beyond the present to visualize how future circumstances could be a little better. You could keep a journal to remind yourself that time is passing and your situation is likely to improve in many ways.

Accept that Change is a Part of Living. Acceptance of misfortune and circumstances that cannot be changed helps you focus on other circumstances where you can make a difference.

Move Toward Small Tangible Goals. Develop realistic goals you know you can meet rather than focusing on large or abstract tasks. Even if small accomplishments don't seem important, reaching these goals will help you move toward your ultimate goals.

Take Decisive Actions. Fight back as much as possible. Perform actions rather than detaching from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

Look for Opportunities for Self-Discovery. Focus on how you have grown in response to unfortunate events. Many people who experience tragedies and hardships report better relationships, greater sense of strength (even while feeling vulnerable), increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.

Nurture a Positive View of Yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instinct helps build resilience. Recall times and circumstances when you overcame hardship and remember how you accomplished it.

Keep Things in Perspective. Consider what's happened in a broader context; in other words, look at the big picture. Your situation might not seem as bad when you compare it with other good things in your life.

Maintain a Hopeful Outlook. Optimism helps you identify and gain power from good things coming your way. Consciously visualize what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

Take Care of Yourself. Pay attention to your personal needs and feelings. Do what you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly, eat healthier, and pray on a regular basis.

By Sharon Duffy, RN, MS, CRRN

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