

The Building Blocks of Resilience

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“Resilience” is a person’s ability to fully engage in life, recover from challenges (such as stressful or hurtful events), and, as a result, increase the capacity to thrive in the future. Some people seem to have it naturally. Others struggle more at coping with, or recovering from, a trying experience. If you have trouble with resilience, try not to get discouraged. There are a few simple steps you can take to be more resilient.

Keep a journal

Writing in a journal is a great way to express yourself. It is also a great way to “de-stress” yourself. When you put your thoughts down on paper, you are giving them your full attention. You are openly dealing with hurts and struggles that otherwise might become buried. Whether you are feeling angry, afraid or alone, keeping a journal can help.

Writing in a journal can be helpful in coping with the loss of a loved one. Sharing your thoughts and feelings about the person in a journal can help you feel connected. It is also a healthy way to work through the grieving process.

Choose to volunteer

When you volunteer, you not only help others, but you also help yourself. Volunteering gives you a sense of purpose. It makes you feel like you are making a difference in your world. Maybe that’s why adults volunteered nearly 7 billion hours of service in 2013, according to volunteeringinamerica.gov.

Volunteering comes in all sorts of shapes and sizes. You can be a greeter at your church. You can join the booster club at your kid’s school. You can offer to babysit your neighbor’s kids or mow their lawn. You can stuff envelopes for a local charity. The payback of volunteering can be both physical and mental. It can also take the focus off of yourself and your own problems.

Build self-esteem

Low self-esteem can be a big roadblock to resilience. It’s tough to bounce back from a hardship if you feel badly about yourself. Self-esteem is shaped during childhood. This means you may have had low self-esteem for quite some time. The good news is it’s never too late to build your self-esteem. You can also build your resilience in the process.

One way to do this is by speaking kindly to yourself. Don't dwell on past mistakes and failures. Instead, try to see them as learning experiences. Realize that no one is perfect. Treat yourself with respect. Speak to yourself with hopeful words.

Stay positive

People who are optimists have more resilience. They have a habit of looking on the "bright side." If they lose their job, for instance, they don't panic about their future. Instead, they see it as a chance to get a better job.

You may not feel like an optimist. You likely know some positive people, though. One easy way to boost your own resilience is to surround yourself with optimists. Their positive frame of mind will soon "rub off" on you. The reverse is also true. If you "hang out" with pessimists, you will tend to be negative too.

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