

Seven steps to maintaining resiliency during COVID-19 stress

Resilience is important to good mental health and wellbeing. It helps us to overcome adversity in general and, more specifically, mental health challenges, including substance use disorders. All of us, at some point in our lives, need to tap into resiliency to overcome one obstacle or another.

But what is resiliency? The good news is that it's not something that you have or don't have. It's a trait that individuals can develop. More specifically, "it involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone," according to the American Psychological Association.

As the country endures the COVID-19 pandemic, resilience is essential to surviving it. Psychologist Susan J. Mecca, PhD, author of "[The Gift of Crisis: Finding Your Best Self in the Worst of Times](#)", offers the following advice on how to develop this important survival skill.

1. *Avoid the three "P's"*: Work to avoid an all-or-nothing attitude described through 1) personalization ("this was my fault"); 2) pervasiveness ("this affects everything"); and 3) permanence ("nothing will ever be the same again"). Separating yourself from the crisis is a factor in post-traumatic growth, which is any positive change that results from a life-altering or traumatic event. (To learn more about post-traumatic growth, click [here](#) for a Beacon Health Options blog on the topic.)
2. *Develop a community of support*. Research consistently shows that having support during challenging times not only improves health outcomes but also enhances resilience to stress. However, it's important to note that this support must be real, quality relationships – not something that can be achieved through social media (Facebook, Instagram etc.) alone. Make that phone call or set up a Zoom meeting to connect with family and friends.
3. *Accept what is right now*. Mindfulness helps us to stay in the moment. Don't embellish what is in front of you by creating stories that are larger than the actual event.
4. *Foster optimism*. Be aware of the good around you and acknowledge it. Be grateful for the good things in your life as a reminder that it's not all bad out there. Gratitude is key to resilience.
5. *Practice self-compassion*. There are three essential components to self-compassion: 1) Self-kindness. Don't judge yourself too harshly when things go wrong; 2) Common humanity. Develop a sense of belonging to something bigger than yourself. We're in this together for support and perspective; a crisis is no time to isolate; and 3) Mindfulness. Don't over identify with this crisis. Don't let it become your entire sense of self.

6. *Develop and nurture a sense of humor.* Humor is an age-old remedy for many ills. The human brain's capacity for humor is unique, and we shouldn't squander such a gift, particularly during times of crisis.
7. *Allow time for recovery.* The lack of a recovery period dramatically holds back our collective ability to be resilient, according to Dr. Mecca. Indeed, [research indicates](#) there is a correlation between lack of recovery and increased incidence of health problems. Do a self-audit to figure out what aspects of yourself need the most attention. For example, do you need to focus on your physical health (exercise and diet); emotional health (taking time to grieve your losses or rebuild relationships); spiritual health (connecting with a spiritual community, nature, or anything that brings you a sense of peace and hope); or your mental health (practicing gratitude, mindfulness, or self-compassion). Once you've identified what to attend to, recognize that it may be weeks or months to completely recover.

These tips can help empower you to access your resiliency skills. However, if you feel that you need further support, call your primary care physician, mental health provider, or employee assistance program.