

Building Your Resilience with Self-Care

5th August 2021

Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, such as when you may be experiencing personal or family issues, a serious health concern, work stress, money worries, or other difficulties. It's the ability to bounce back from challenges. One of the key ways to build resilience is to focus on self-care. "Taking care of yourself," writes the American Psychological Association, "helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience."

Here are six ways to take care of yourself to help build your resilience.

Pay attention to your physical self-care

Make exercise a priority. This is especially important during challenging times. Try to get a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise that makes you breathe harder on all or most days of the week, whether it's walking, swimming, biking, working out at the gym or along with an exercise video, or even doing vigorous chores at home.

Follow a healthy diet. Avoid junk food and fast food. Limit how much alcohol you drink; over time, it depletes your energy and resilience.

Follow good sleep practices. Establish a bedtime routine and try to stick to it. It can be as simple as listening to soft music, drinking a cup of herbal tea, turning off your electronic devices about an hour before you go to bed, or taking a bath and then turning out the lights at the same time every night. Try not to watch programs or shows that are disturbing or too stimulating, as it may then be difficult to turn off your brain. Try to unload what's on your mind before you go to bed.

Reframe how you view problems and challenges

A key element of resilience is your perception of an event, according to the Columbia University psychologist, George Bonanno, who has been studying resilience for 25 years.

Reframe a difficult experience. Reframing means changing the way you think or "talk" to yourself about a stressful event. Instead of saying "I'll never get through this," you might try a more positive and realistic thought such as, "I will get through this by using the techniques that have helped when I've had difficult experiences in the past, including asking others for

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help and finding strength in my community.”

Remember that stressful events usually provide opportunities to learn and grow. Try to identify these, so they can help you in the future. For example, if you are dealing with significant financial concerns, try to understand the things that contributed to your situation and what you could do in the future to avoid repeating the same mistakes (i.e. fewer credit cards, not carrying a balance, making a budget, etc.)

Build your emotional resilience

Learn from others who are role models of resilience. Think about other people you know and admire who are resilient, whether they are public figures or people you may know in your personal or work life. What are some of the strategies you’ve noticed them using to deal with and stay strong through adversity? Think about how you could adapt and use some of those strategies in your own life.

“This too shall pass.” Try to see your situation as temporary, no matter how difficult. Life tends to ebb and flow in ways that are impossible to predict. This view can help you gain perspective and maintain momentum to work through the current circumstance.

Try to avoid catastrophic thinking. During times of uncertainty, we often try to fill in the blanks. We may wonder “what if this happens” and imagine worst-case scenarios. While it is good to be prepared, it is rare that worst-case scenarios come true.

Give yourself a break from media

When a national or world event is dominating the news, avoid over-exposure to media, especially if it is making you feel ineffective, anxious, or unable to have control of your life. Many media-worthy events can be presented in an exaggerated or false manner to attract attention. Unplug for part of each day from all your sources of media and news.

Keep your life simple

Simplifying your life is especially important during stressful times.

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Simplify your routines and set limits to protect your time. Plan simple meals. Resist signing up for too many activities or over-committing yourself. Don't be afraid to say "no."

Make time for simple pleasures, such as watching the sunset, playing with your pet, or simply sitting and drinking a good cup of tea with someone you love.

Practice relaxation techniques

Deep breathing, meditation, mindfulness, and yoga are four widely used relaxation techniques that can help improve mental and physical wellbeing.

Adopting tips like these and taking care of yourself will help you build your resilience.