



tip Stay positive, build self-esteem

Developing competence and confidence in yourself and your ability to cope through difficult periods helps build resilience. Consider starting the process by making a few lists.

For example, consider writing down:

- Five strengths
- Five characteristics you like about yourself
- Five of your greatest accomplishments
- Five coping skills that enabled you to overcome adversity in the past
- 10 inexpensive rewards for yourself that don't include food, such as an afternoon in a park with your family
- 10 ways to make yourself laugh
- 10 actions you can take to help someone else
- 10 things you can do to feel good about yourself, such as exercise or a healthful snack

If you're having trouble getting started, think about what others have said about you. For example, friends may have told you they admire your sense of humor. Perhaps your family loves your cooking skills. Or, your co-workers appreciate your diligence and teamwork on projects.

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Mind matters

Current Article

Navigate life's twisting road to find resilience

Workplace stress. A disease diagnosis. A death in the family. Sometimes, it seems like there's no end to the troubles that can come our way. But, while life has its share of challenges, there are ways to cope and adapt.



One of the most effective is to learn to build resilience — a means of adapting well in the face of hardship. This ability to bounce back can help you rebuild your life after a difficult event. Effectively coping with life's challenges is one way to gain courage and insight.

Building resilience is an ongoing process that requires time and effort. People may take different paths to resilience. But, according to the American Psychological Association, it's a skill involving thoughts and actions that anyone can develop.

Setting the foundation

A few changes in the way you prepare for or respond to situations and events may help. Consider these resilience-building tips:

- **Make connections.** Research shows that having strong relationships with family, friends and other people in your life plays a leading role in your resilience. Accept help and support from those who care. Return the favor when others need you. You also may find comfort in something greater than yourself. For example, some people rely on their spirituality during trying times. It also may help you to make connections by joining a group, taking a class or volunteering.
- **See the situation in a new light.** Look at highly stressful events as bumps in the road, not the road itself. While some troubles may be beyond your control, you can control your reactions. If you have problems at work, for example, look at these obstacles as opportunities to learn new skills.
- **Keep your perspective.** In the short run, events can seem catastrophic. Try to take a long view and see how this event fits into the broader scope of your life. For example, a heart attack could motivate you to make healthful choices.
- **Accept change.** When adverse situations occur, you may find that you can no longer reach a treasured goal you've set for yourself. Coming to terms with that new reality — and learning to live with it — can help you focus on new goals. Sometimes, you may need to make a change that might make your life better. For example, you may need to remove yourself from a difficult relationship.
- **Set small, reachable goals.** Don't despair if a goal seems far away. Try to take small steps every day that put you closer to your objective. For instance, if you'd like to lose some weight, set a healthful goal — such as 1 or 2 pounds per week — rather than trying to lose it all at once.

Take care of yourself. When you're under stress, don't ignore your feelings and needs. Take time for activities you find relaxing and enjoyable, such as a favorite hobby. Or, take some time to exercise. Physical activity has many health benefits, including helping your mood.

Many people who have lived through trying times say the experience ultimately made them stronger. You may find that your relationships become more durable and your appreciation of life grows deeper.

For more information about resilience, consider reading:

- *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* by Martin Seligman, Ph.D., Vintage Books, 2006.

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