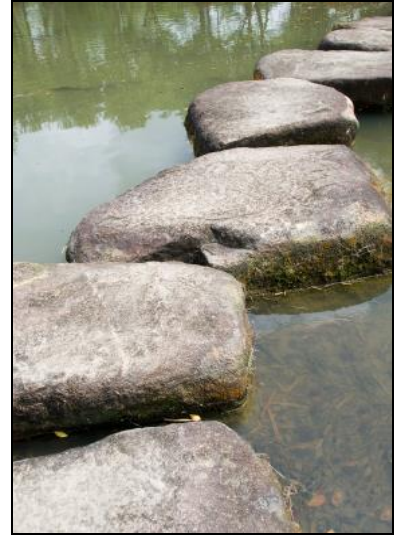


Working through Loss and Uncertainty

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress. People very commonly demonstrate resilience. *Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn't experience extreme difficulty, stress or distress.* Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed by anyone.

Change and stress are natural facts of life. Our mind and body can react to chronic or acute stress by creating depression and stress related illness. Stress affects our memory, our energy, and our ability to function. Consequently, just like creating a saving account for unexpected expenses, it is in our best interest to continually build our resiliency skills so we can be better prepared to withstand the storms of life.



Resilient people seek help from reliable people in times of stress. It's not that resilient people don't feel stress, or that they're better trained to deal with it (although more resilient people may be more likely than others to practice stress management). Resilient people recognize that bad things happen to good people, so they aren't overwhelmed by stress when they experience setbacks (a "given" in life). *Being resilient means cultivating coping skills that create a strong foundation for our mind/body health and the inevitable changes we experience.*

Qualities that help individuals develop resilience:

- ✓ Develop the ability to say no and set limits and boundaries
- ✓ Recognize your gifts and talents
- ✓ Admit your vulnerability and challenges
- ✓ Practice connecting with others
- ✓ Identify what part of each problem belongs to you and what you have the ability to change
- ✓ Define your needs vs. wants
- ✓ Practice transforming resentment
- ✓ Develop the ability to forgive and accept
- ✓ Use your sense of humor
- ✓ Realize that anger from others is frequently based on fear
- ✓ Practice trusting (letting go) instead of controlling
- ✓ Identify where you experience stress in your body
- ✓ Practice stress management tools
- ✓ Acknowledge that moving through a situation frequently requires loss
- ✓ Create "down" time to restore yourself
- ✓ Practice being in the present – not the past or future

How high is *your* resilience today? Review the checklist on the following page to see which resilience markers needs attention in your life! Perhaps rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 (highest). Indicate a ✓ in the "needs work" column if you have a rating of 7 or lower.

Resilience Check List

<i>Rating!</i>	<i>Needs Work!</i>	<i>Resilience resource</i>	<i>Cultivation of Resources</i>
		Strong connection with others-supportive and caring relations, whether inside or outside of family. Relationships that create love, respect and trust provide positive role models to help bolster a person's ability to cope.	Set some weekly goals of reaching out to develop more relationships with individuals or groups that you consider resourceful and healthy. Ask a co-worker to lunch, visit a new church, meditation or exercise group or become involved in volunteer work. Having a friend requires being a friend.
		Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events.	Change your mind and keep the change! Perceptions and expectations can set up increased stressors. Listen to your self-talk. If you are frequently in a state of fear or stress, shift your focus to what is working in your life and increase your patience with resolution of what you perceive as problems. Most issues have their own rhythm for resolution.
		Acknowledge change – Change is a constant in life. To expect otherwise weakens our resilience.	The old saying of making lemonade out of lemons has value. If you use challenges as a turning point for you to shift perception, reprioritize or update old beliefs, you are more likely to find the hidden gifts in change.
		Make realistic plans and goals and take steps to carry them out	Write down your goals to make them tangible and the steps necessary for you to take to achieve them. Change black and white think of goals to one of shades of improvement. Be sure to create small short-term goals as well as long- term dreams.
		Develop a positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities	You are a survivor! What challenges have you successful dealt with in the past? In what areas of your life do you feel most comfortable? Forgiveness, acceptance and compassion should be directed inward, not just at others.
		Become skilled in communication and problem solving.	What are the commonalities you share with family, friends and co-workers? Being honest with your intentions, needs and fears encourages the same behavior in others. Recognizing that others have a right to their own thoughts reduces your stress.
		Learn to manage strong feelings and impulses.	Anger is frequently a release for a lot of other emotions. Ask yourself, what are you really feeling? Realize you do not need to react to every issue; you can take time to have a measured response where you combine thought with emotion.

Identify two significant experiences of change you've had to cope with in your life. What did you learn from these experiences?

1. _____

2. _____