



HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS AND BECOME MORE RESILIENT

Resilience refers to how well you can deal with and bounce back from the difficulties of life. It can mean the difference between handling pressure and losing your cool. Resilient people tend to maintain a more positive outlook and cope with stress more effectively. Some people seem to come by resilience naturally, but these behaviours can also be learned.

If you would like to be able to handle life's challenges (both major and minor) with greater ease, grow from adversity, and turn potentially negative events into positive ones, the following steps can help you to become more resilient to stress.

FIND A SENSE OF PURPOSE

In the face of crisis or tragedy, finding a sense of purpose may play a significant role in your recovery. This might mean becoming involved in your community, cultivating your spirituality, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you.

BELIEVE IN YOUR ABILITIES

Having confidence in your own ability to cope with the stresses of life can play an important part in resilience. Becoming more confident including your ability to respond to and deal with a crisis, is a terrific way to build resilience for the future. Listen for negative comments in your head. When you hear them, practice immediately replacing them with positive ones, such as, "I can do this," "I'm a great friend/mother/partner," or "I'm good at my job."

DEVELOP THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Resilient people tend to view life's difficulties as challenges and respond accordingly with action, rather than with fear, self-pity, blame, or a "victim mentality." While life can be incredibly challenging, a major step in becoming more resilient is to develop positive self-esteem.

Talk to and remind yourself that you are strong and can grow stronger and wiser as you handle life's challenges.

BECOME AWARE

Part of resilience is emotional awareness; it's important to understand what you're feeling and why. Sometimes people feel overwhelmed with their emotions, and this frightens and immobilizes them.

Knowing why you feel upset can provide valuable information about what needs to change in your life.

It's also important to do research on how to meet the challenges you face. Maintaining a diary can help you explore your inner world and come up with a plan of action.

DEVELOP INTERNAL CONTROL

Resilient people believe that they're in control of their lives, and it's true: while we can't control our circumstances, we can control how we respond to those circumstances, and that makes a big difference in our attitudes and in the course our lives take. Fortunately, you can develop your internal control.

CULTIVATE OPTIMISM

Being an optimist is more than looking on the bright side - though that helps. It's a way of viewing the world where you maximize your strengths and accomplishments and minimize your weaknesses and setbacks. Developing a more optimistic view can help you become more resilient.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

While we ultimately face our own challenges, a supportive friend or group of friends can help lighten the load. Those with strong networks of social support tend to stay healthier and happier throughout life and tend to cope well with stress.

Conversely, those with little support may find themselves more vulnerable, and those with conflicted and unsupportive relationships tend to fare even worse.

EMBRACE CHANGE

Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. By learning how to be more adaptable, you'll be better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis. Resilient people often utilise these events as an opportunity to branch out in new directions. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes, highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and thrive.



MAINTAIN YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR

If you're able to laugh at life's frustrations, you can have increased immunity, if you will, to stress and adversity. Those with a sense of humour about life tend to experience life as less stressful, can bond with others during difficult times, and experience the numerous benefits of laughter. If you can take a step back from difficult situations long enough to maintain your sense of humour, you will be more resilient, too.

EXERCISE

Exercise has been correlated with stronger levels of resilience. This may be due to the effects of endorphins on one's mood, or the physical health benefits to those who exercise, or both. Regardless, adding a regular exercise habit to your lifestyle can benefit you in more ways than one.

GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR SPIRITUAL SIDE

Studies have shown that those who are more spiritual tend to be more resilient as well. This doesn't mean that you can't be resilient if you are atheist or agnostic. But if you are open to it, reconnecting or strengthening your connection to your spiritual side can provide you with strength.

Note - this means different things to different people. That could mean meditation or yoga to connect with yourself, going on a quiet and reflective walk in the park, or dedicating yourself to another ritual in your life.

NURTURE YOURSELF

When you're stressed, it can be all too easy to neglect your own needs. Losing your appetite, ignoring exercise, and not getting enough sleep are all common reactions to a crisis situation. Instead, focus on building your self-nurturance skills, even when you're troubled. Make time for activities that you enjoy.

DEVELOP / WORK ON YOUR PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Research suggests that people who are able to come up with solutions to a problem are better able to cope with problems than those who cannot. Whenever you encounter a new challenge, make a quick list of some of the potential ways you could solve the problem.

Experiment with different strategies and focus on developing a logical way to work through common problems. By practicing your problem-solving skills on a regular basis, you will be better prepared to cope when a serious challenge emerges.

ESTABLISH GOALS

Crisis situations are daunting. They may even seem insurmountable. Resilient people are able to view these situations in a realistic way and then set reasonable goals to deal with the problem.

When you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by a situation, take a step back to simply assess what is before you. Brainstorm possible solutions, and then break them down into manageable steps.

TAKE ACTION

Simply waiting for a problem to go away on its own only prolongs the crisis. Instead, start working on resolving the issue immediately. While there may not be any fast or simple solution, you can take steps toward making your situation better and less stressful.

Focus on the progress that you have made thus far and planning your next steps, rather than becoming discouraged by the amount of work that still needs to be accomplished.

DON'T GIVE UP

While many people know of coping strategies that can help with stress, as with diets and exercise programs, the most successful individuals are those who maintain the effort for the long term. Don't give up on your situation; don't stop working toward getting through it.

