



TESS Newsletter

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“ Turning Possibilities into Realities ”

Building a Global Movement for Change [UNSG]: The Promise (part 44)



"Working Hard at Working Smart" (part LV)

2014: Raising The Bar: The Value of Emotional Resilience



**"Success is not final, failure is not fatal:
it is the courage to continue that counts."**

Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955.

The future we want: The Promise: The Force Beyond

The Traits, Benefits and Development of Emotional Resilience

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What Is Emotional Resilience?

Emotional resilience refers to one's ability to adapt to stressful situations or crises. More resilient people are able to "roll with the punches" and adapt to adversity without lasting difficulties; less resilient people have a harder time with stress and life changes, both major and minor. It's been found that those who deal with minor stresses more easily can also manage major crises with greater ease, **so resilience has its benefits for daily life as well as for the rare major catastrophe.**

What Influences Emotional Resilience?

Emotional and physical resilience is, to a degree, something you're born with. Some people, by nature, are less upset by changes and surprises -- this can be observed in infancy and tends to be stable throughout one's lifetime. Emotional resilience is also related to some factors that aren't under your control, **such as age, gender, and exposure to trauma.** However, resilience can be developed with a little effort. If you know what to do, you can become more resilient, even if you are naturally more sensitive to life's difficulties.

What Are Traits of Emotional Resilience?

Resilience is not a quality that you either do or do not possess; there are varying degrees of how well a person is able to handle stress. Still, there are certain characteristics that resilient people tend to share. Some of the main characteristics are:

Emotional Awareness: They understand what they're feeling and why.

Perseverance: Whether they're working toward outward goals or on inner coping strategies, they're action-oriented -- they trust in the process and don't give up.

Internal Locus of Control: They believe that they, rather than outside forces, are in control of their own lives.

Optimism: They see the positives in most situations and believe in their own strength.

Support: While they tend to be strong individuals, they know the value of social support and are able to surround themselves with supportive friends and family.

Sense of Humor: They're able to laugh at life's difficulties. (most essential)

Perspective: Resilient people are able to learn from their mistakes (rather than deny them), see obstacles as challenges, and allow adversity to make them stronger. They can also find meaning in life's challenges rather than seeing themselves as victims.

Spirituality: Being connected to your spiritual side has been connected with stronger emotional resilience, especially if you're internally connected and not just going through the motions of attending services. (This doesn't mean that people who aren't spiritual can't be resilient, just that this connection has been found.)

How To Become More Resilient

As mentioned, emotional resilience can be developed. And because stress and change are a part of life, there are always opportunities to practice resilience -- the payoffs are significant. All it takes is an interest and commitment to the process, and a little information on how to develop and strengthen traits of resilience.

Cope With Stress and Become More Resilient

Emotional resilience is partially inborn, but it can (and should) be learned and developed. If you'd like to be able to handle life's challenges (both major and minor) with greater ease, to grow from adversity, and to turn potentially negative events into positive ones, the following steps can help you to become more resilient to stress. [**Difficulty:** Average // **Time Required:** Ongoing // **Here's How**]

1. **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 very challenging, an important step in becoming more resilient is to develop positive self-talk and to remind yourself that you are strong and can grow stronger and more wise as you handle life's challenges.

2. **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 journal can help you explore your inner world and come up with a plan of action.

3. **Develop An Internal Locus of 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 an internal locus of control.

4. **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 world view can help you become more resilient.

5. **Rally 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.

6. **Maintain Your Sense of Humor**

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 humor about life tend to experience life as less stressful, are able to 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 humor, you will be more resilient, too.

7. **Exercise**

Yes, you read right. 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.

8. **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. ■

Making a Difference Make it a Priority

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. Trust the process. And the time to have a more optimistic world view is now.

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