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Healthy matters to keep in mind.

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The Art of Bouncing Back Developing Resilience

Have you ever noticed that some people always seem to see the glass as half full, while others view it as half empty? The quality that helps people deal with stress in a positive way is called resilience.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), resilience means “the personal and community qualities that enable us to rebound from adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or other stresses — and to go on with life with a sense of mastery, competence and hope.”¹

Resilience is more than a sunny disposition. It is a

quality that affects every part of our lives. And it takes practice. We can become more resilient by taking charge of the way we react to life’s events.

Taking charge means viewing our response to life’s events as something we can control — not something that controls us. It means deciding how we will react. The world is a stressful place, but we don’t have to let stress run our lives.

Being resilient doesn’t mean ignoring life’s ups and downs. It doesn’t mean pretending stress and pain

don’t affect us. Of course they do. Resilience allows us to recover — to bounce back — in a healthy way.

Resilience can help us recover from a shock or loss. It can help us live with chronic pain or mental illness. A resilient person can meet life’s challenges with confidence.

Portrait of a Resilient Person

A resilient person is able to resist stress and weather bad times. A resilient person probably has:

- A network of supportive people
- A sense of confidence in his or her own abilities
- Good communication skills
- Good problem-solving skills
- Techniques for managing feelings and impulses

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Ten Ways to Build Resilience²

1. **Make connections.**

Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.

2. **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. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

3. **Accept that change is a part of living.**

Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that

cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

4. **Move toward your goals.**

Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, “What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?”

5. **Take decisive actions.**

Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

6. **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.**

People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, a greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable,

an increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and a heightened appreciation for life.

7. **Nurture a positive view of yourself.**

Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

8. **Keep things in perspective.**

Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context, and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

9. **Maintain a hopeful outlook.**

An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

10. **Take care of yourself.**

Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful. For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events in their life. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.

The key is to identify ways that are likely to work well for you as part of your own personal strategy for fostering resilience.

Resources

United Behavioral Health

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.

www.liveandworkwell.com

Visit the “Coping with Stress” Life Stages center for strategies and resources for controlling stress and anxiety.

The information and therapeutic approaches in this article are provided for educational purposes only and are not meant to be used in place of professional clinical consultations for individual health needs. Certain treatments may not be covered in some benefit plans. Check your health plan regarding your coverage of services. UBH does not endorse any particular third-party Web site but simply offers examples of some of the more common sites available.

1 National Alliance on Mental Illness. Available at http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find_Support/Consumer_Support/Preface_to_Recovery_Stories.htm.

2 American Psychological Association. Available at <http://www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=6&ch=4>.