

Jan. '18 The Road to Resilience - Part 1

How do people deal with difficult events and the very challenging life experiences that change their lives?
Resilience!

What is resilience? Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences. Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. 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 in anyone.

Factors in Resilience: A combination of factors contributes to resilience. Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family.

Ways to Strengthen Resilience:

- **Make connections.** Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.
- **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.
- **Accept that change is a part of living.** Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.
- **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?"
- **Take decisive actions.** Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.
- **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.
- **Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
- **Keep things in perspective.** Avoid blowing the event out of proportion. Try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.
- **Maintain a hopeful outlook.** Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear. It enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life.

- **Take care of yourself.** Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly.

The Road to Resilience – Part 2

In part 1, we learned that a combination of factors contribute to resilience as well as several ways that can strengthen our resilience. Below are **additional ways of strengthening resilience:**

- Writing about your thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful situations.
- Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.
- Getting help when you need it is crucial in building your resilience. Beyond caring family members and friends, people often find it helpful to turn to:
 - **A licensed mental health professional** such as a psychologist can assist people in developing an appropriate strategy for moving forward. It is important to get professional help if you feel like you are unable to function or perform basic activities of daily living as a result of a traumatic or other stressful life experience.
 - **Self-help and support groups.** Such community groups can aid people struggling with hardships such as the death of a loved one. By sharing information, ideas and emotions, group participants can assist one another and find comfort in knowing that they are not alone in experiencing difficulty.
 - **Books and other publications** by people who have successfully managed adverse situations such as surviving cancer. These stories can motivate readers to find a strategy that might work for them personally.

Different people tend to be comfortable with somewhat different styles of interaction. A person should feel at ease and have good rapport in working with a mental health professional or participating in a support group.

"You are my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead and guide me." Psalm 31:4

Source: American Psychological Association

If I can be of assistance to you or someone you know please contact me at 630-844-3780, X-243 or jean.clementz@presencehealth.org.

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