

An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

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FYI: Building Your Resilience

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress – such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

Developing your resilience is a personal journey. An approach to building resilience that works well for one person might not work for another. People use varying strategies. Some variation may reflect cultural differences. For example, an individual's culture might have an impact on whether, and how, he or she connects with others and communicates feelings.

The following pointers may be helpful to consider in developing your own strategy for building resilience.

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 can also 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. 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.

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.

Move toward your goals: Think about possible solutions to the problems you are facing and decide what realistic goals you want to achieve. Do something regularly – even if it seems like a small accomplishment – that enables you to move forward. Focus away from tasks that seem unachievable. Instead, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

Many people find it helpful to track their progress by making a record of any accomplishment that moves

them toward their goals. It is important to spend a moment reflecting on the fact that you are taking action and achieving what you believe you need to do.

Take decisive actions: Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away. Being active instead of passive helps people more effectively manage adversity.

Find positive ways to reduce stress and negative feelings: Following a stressful event, many people feel they need to turn away from the negative thoughts and feelings they are experiencing. Positive distractions such as exercising, going to a movie or reading a book can help renew you so you can re-focus on meeting challenges in your life. Avoid numbing your unpleasant feelings with alcohol or drugs.

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, 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: 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. Strong emotional reactions to adversity are normal and typically lessen over time.

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. Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing and that contribute to good health, including regular exercise and healthy eating. Taking care of yourself helps 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 to developing

an effective personal strategy is to identify ways of building your resilience that are likely to work well for you.

Where to look for help

Getting help when you need it is crucial to building your resilience. Many people turn to family members, friends and others who care about them for the support and encouragement they need.

Self-help and community support 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.

For many people, using their own resources and getting help from others may be sufficient for building resilience. At times, however, an individual might get stuck or have difficulty making progress on the road to resilience.

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 otherwise stressful life experience.

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

This fact sheet is adapted largely from "The Road to Resilience," available on the Psychology Help Center, located online. The American Psychological Association Practice Directorate gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Rick Allen, PhD; Lillian Comas-Diaz, PhD; Suniya S. Luthar, PhD; Salvatore R. Maddi, PhD; H. Katherine (Kit) O'Neill, PhD; Karen W. Saakvitne, PhD; and Richard Glenn Tedeschi, PhD, in developing this material.

Six myths about stress

Six myths surround stress. Dispelling them enables us to understand our problems and then take action against them. Let's look at these myths.

Myth 1: Stress is the same for everybody.

Completely wrong. Stress is different for each of us. What is stressful for one person may or may not be stressful for another; each of us responds to stress in an entirely different way.

Myth 2: Stress is always bad for you.

According to this view, zero stress makes us happy and healthy. Wrong. Stress is to the human condition what tension is to the violin string: too little and the music is dull and raspy; too much and the music is shrill or the string snaps. Stress can be the kiss of death or the spice of life. The issue, really, is how to manage it. Managed stress makes us productive and happy; mismanaged stress hurts and even kills us.

Myth 3: Stress is everywhere, so you can't do anything about it.

Not so. You can plan your life so that stress does not overwhelm you. Effective planning involves setting priorities and working on simple problems first, solving them, and then going on to more complex difficulties. When stress is mismanaged, it's difficult to prioritize. All your problems seem to be equal and stress seems to be everywhere.

Myth 4: The most popular techniques for reducing stress are the best ones.

Again, not so. No universally effective stress reduction techniques exist. We are all different, our lives are different, our situations are different, and our reactions are different. Only a comprehensive program tailored to the individual works.

Myth 5: No symptoms, no stress.

Absence of symptoms does not mean the absence of stress. In fact, camouflaging symptoms with medication may deprive you of the signals you need for reducing the strain on your physiological and psychological systems.

Myth 6: Only major symptoms of stress require attention.

This myth assumes that the "minor" symptoms, such as headaches or stomach acid, may be safely ignored. Minor symptoms of stress are the early warnings that your life is getting out of hand and that you need to do a better job of managing stress.

Adapted from The Stress Solution by Lyle H. Miller, Ph.D., and Alma Dell Smith, Ph.D. Originally published in The American Psychological Association Psychology Help Center. Six Myths about stress.
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-myths.aspx>

Parenting Corner

Search: [Dan Siegel - "Being" Versus "Doing" With Your Child](#)

Search: ['Children Succeed' With Character, Not Test Scores - NPR.org](#)

Search:

http://www.ted.com/playlists/1/how_does_my_brain_work

Daniel Siegel, MD - Mindfulness and Neural Integration

Dan demonstrates how relationships can impact our brains, cause neural integration .

<http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxStudioCityED-Daniel-Siegel>

Net News

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful:

Search: Diaphragmatic Breathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ySGgAFAAo>

Search: [Huffingtonpost: The benefits of writing with good old fashioned pen and paper](#)

Self-Help Corner:

City of Edmonton Community Resources: 211

Support Network / Distress Line: 780-482-HELP

Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868