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BOUNCE BACK: *Developing Emotional Resilience*

Major disruptions are a “gotcha” we all experience at one time or another in our lives. We get fired, laid off or passed over; a loved one dies, leaves or gets in trouble; a project stalls or gets cancelled. The list, unfortunately, is endless.

For some, the impact of these hard times is overwhelming. Recovery, if it comes at all, can be painfully slow. Others show resilience and are admirably able to glide through these times fairly easily, bouncing back to a normal life again quickly. Resilience—the strength required to adapt to change—acts as our internal compass so we can resourcefully navigate an upset.

When unexpected events turn life upside down, it’s the degree to which our resiliency comes into play that makes these “make-or-break” situations an opportunity for growth. The good news is that each of us has the capacity to reorganize our life after a disruption and to achieve new levels of strength and meaningfulness. Though it’s easy to feel vulnerable in the midst of chaos and uncertainty, life disruptions are not necessarily a bad thing because they help us grow and meet future challenges in our lives. It’s a lot like a bone that was once fragile or broken, and is now strong from being used.

So how can you become more resilient? Here’s a look at seven key characteristics of people who demonstrate resilience during life’s curve balls.

1. A Sense of Hope and Trust in the World

Resilient people rely on their belief in the basic goodness of the world and trust that things will turn out all right in the end. This positive attitude allows them to weather times when everything seems bleak and to look for and accept the support that is out there. This approach toward the world gives them the ability to hope for a better future.

2. Interpreting Experiences in a New Light

The ability to look at a situation in a new way (a skill called “reframing”) can minimize the impact of a difficult situation. Resilient people take a creative approach toward solving a problem, and don’t always use an old definition for a new challenge.

3. A Meaningful System of Support

One of the best ways to endure a crisis is to have the support of another person who can listen and validate your feelings. Knowing that others care and will come to our support decreases the feeling of isolation, especially when tackling a problem alone. It’s important to choose people you trust. Don’t be surprised if it takes several friends, each of whom can provide different kinds of support. Resilient people aren’t stoic loners. They know the value of expressing their fears and frustrations, as well as receiving support, coaching or guidance from friends, family or a professional.

4. A Sense of Mastery and Control Over Your Destiny

You may not be able to predict the future, but you can tackle a problem instead of feeling at the mercy of forces outside of your control. Resilient people know that ultimately their survival and the integrity of their life values depend on their ability to take action rather than remain passive. Tough times call for you to tap into your own sense of personal responsibility.

5. Self-Reflection and Insight

Life’s experiences provide fertile ground for learning. Asking yourself questions that invite introspection can open a door to new understanding and appreciation of who you are and what you stand for. Giving voice to your thoughts and feelings leads to insight and helps transform the meaning of a problem into something useful. Resilient people learn from life situations and do not succumb to punishing themselves because of decisions made in the past.

6. A Wide Range of Interests

People who show resilience in the face of adversity are those who have a diversity of interests. They’re open to new experiences and ideas. Because their lives are rich and varied, it’s easier for them to find relief from the single mindedness and worry that often accompany a crisis.

7. Sense of Humor

Have you ever had a wry laugh during a difficult situation? The ability to see the absurdity, irony, or genuine humor in a situation stimulates our sense of hope and possibility. Humor has both psychological and physical benefits in relieving stress because it encourages a swift change in your perception of your circumstances—and when your thoughts change, your mood follows.

When you look to improve these seven areas now — rather than when adversity pays a visit — you’ll be able to bounce back more quickly.



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