

# *The little guide to Resilience*

**7 INSIGHTS TO HELP YOU GROW YOUR PERSONAL RESILIENCE**





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## **7 INSIGHTS TO HELP YOU GROW YOUR PERSONAL RESILIENCE**

When it comes to being victorious over the most complex circumstances, a positive mindset always works best. We now focus more about our mental well-being and that's not just because more people are suffering from stress, anxiety and depression but because we are finally recognising its vital role when it comes one's performance and engagement with other people, our work and one's life in general.

To recognise the importance of mental wellbeing and resilience we can refer to the conclusions from several physiological studies (Beyond Trauma and Resilience, George A. Bonanno, 2006) as well as some of the first ones some 40 years ago (Garmezy, 1974).

These studies looked at why some individuals reacted differently when faced with challenging life events, why some people could experience post traumatic growth while others suffered for a long time.

Most of the studies came to the conclusion that being resilient played a key part in the process.

### **What is personal resilience in the first place?**

Resilience is often described as the ability to bend and not break, to bounce back in the face of adversity. This simple sentence is however hiding all the challenges behind learning to be resilient, the adjustments a person has to do in order to become stronger and grow.

**There is a lot you can do to strengthen your personal resilience, in the following pages you will find 7 insights and practical tools to help you.**

## # 1

# DEVELOP YOUR SELF-AWARENESS AND APPRAISE YOURSELF

In order to begin building your resilience, you have to develop self-awareness.

It implies, you have to be aware of yourself, who you are, what you are capable of, your limits, how you see yourself and how you treat yourself. When your knowledge of self is juxtaposed with people's knowledge of you, you get a balanced picture of who you are, thereby, really knowing your strengths and your weaknesses.

Also, before you attempt building your resilience, it is best to have a good assessment of the level of your resiliency. A good source of assessment report are your friends, co-workers, and family members, they will be in a better to position to tell you how well you handle stress or pressure.

When we face stress or pressure, it unmask a part of our personality that does not express itself when the going is good. Getting a good appraisal on your resilience will clue you in on how much work is needed to get your resiliency up to 21-century standard.

### How do I do this?

A good start is to take some time aside and ask yourself some key questions and then have the courage to ask close friends, co-workers and managers to answer them too. At time being self-aware can take some courage, asking for feedback and learning to receive it can be challenging, but without it we seldom grow.

Thank people for their feedback and look at the common themes. Once you have identified these themes, use the information to improve yourself and your life. Repeat the good stuff and implement actions to work on the constructive comments you feel are valid.

## DEVELOP YOUR SELF-AWARENESS AND APPRAISE YOURSELF

### Some questions you can start with:

What are my strengths?

What are the most important things in my life, what do I value, what do I feel passionate about?

How do I describe myself?

I am living in coherence with my beliefs and my values?

Who are the most important people in my life?

What is the quality of my relationships with others? Am I putting enough effort into the important relationships in my life?

What is my goal in life? What are my goals for the near future?

What's my definition of success?

What do I think about myself?

Am I mostly thinking positive or negative thoughts?

What do I want to portray to others?

How do I react when I am under pressure?

What do I do to look after myself?

How am I doing at work? Am I putting enough effort into my work?

If you could not fail and if there were no limitations, if you could do anything, what would I choose to do?

What energises me?

## # 2

### BE FUTURE ORIENTATED

One way to develop resilience and stay resilient is by being future oriented, that is having a plan for the future and always visualising it becoming a reality.

Such an attitude will help you overcome any unforeseen problems that may arise in your present life. When you have something to look forward to, you always find a way to work through a difficulty in order to get to that something.

It is just like they say “ there is always a light at the end of the tunnel”, when you are in a dark tunnel or woods, the thought of getting to a lighted house or open ground, keeps you going. If this were not to be the case, an individual who is not future oriented will see no reason to fight or keep struggling because they have nothing to look up to for encouragement.

To effectively utilise this method of generating resilience, it is important that your orientation of the future be a positive one, even if the future you envision is a near future.

#### How do I do this?

Finding a life goal can be quite a large task so, if you don't know where to start the first step could be to assess your situation in the here and now. The wheel of life is a good and simple coaching tool that will help you establish small goals to get you started towards long-term larger goals and results.

Draw a circle, divide it into segments and label each segment with an area of your life (health, love, career, relationships, wealth etc.).

Assign a scale of 1-10 for each segment, 1 being at the centre of the circle and representing 'not satisfied at all' to 10 on the outer edge of the circle representing 'fully satisfied'.

Consider the main areas of your life and how emotionally satisfied you are with them and colour in each segment according to the above scale.

This will give you a clear visual representation of the areas you need to focus on to improve your emotional wellbeing and start setting goals.

## # 3

### GUARD YOUR HEART, EYES AND EARS

It is common knowledge that what we hear, see, and believe makes up our personality, shapes our character and determines our disposition.

This notion can be illustrated when we see children from a community with similar backgrounds behave in a stereotyped way. This is possible because they all hear, see and likely believe similar things that are taken as the norm in their community. In the world we live in, one can wake up to a news on the death of a loved one, war, division, lay off, increasing rate of unemployment or cost of living etc. One cannot avoid listening to the news; however, we can all try to avoid taking in all that negativity.

It is in our power to decide how much of it to take in. We do not internalize or brood over bad news. Perhaps, you work or live in a stressful or pressure full environment, where harsh words are being used or people close to you talk you down for the fun of it.

It is entirely up to you to decide how you process what you hear; what you believe or register in yourself, in your heart.

#### How do I do this?

Practicing the three methods shared below will help you stay strong against external pressures and stressors.

#### **1. Take a trip to a museum, open up a magazine and look at beautiful paintings or photographs.**

When we look at beautiful art there is a strong activity in the part of the brain related to pleasure. Professor Zeki, chair in neuroaesthetics at University College London, stated that: 'beautiful paintings makes us feel much better' He carried out an experiment by putting people in a scanner, showing them a series of paintings and measuring blood flow in the brain.

Art has got an incredible positive effect on our brain.

## 2. Listen to some positive upbeat music every day.

Music can lift our spirits. Dr Yana Ferguson, University of Missouri, concluded two different studies measuring brain activity of participants, showing how they successfully improved their short-term moods and overall happiness by listening to different types of music.

The conclusion was simple, people became more positive by listening to happy and upbeat music.

## 3. Practice mindfulness.

Get some grounding in your own life, learn to intentionally direct the focus of your attention.

Our brain can change itself. MRI scans performed on people practicing mindfulness, have shown that regions of the brain related to emotion regulation change over time.

This demonstrates that with simple practice of mindfulness we are all able to change unhelpful patterns of thinking.

Look up the Three Minute Breathing Space Meditation and practice it 3 times a day, you'll see results in a few weeks.



## # 4

### KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

Learning to keep things in perspective is another way of developing resilience. The resilience developed by this method helps you through an unexpected unpleasant situation, such as a flat tire, or being stuck in a lift when going to an important meeting etc.

Whatever situation you find yourself, keeping things in perspective will help you to focus on the matter at hand and not having multiple fits of anger, or slipping into hopelessness, blaming yourself and cursing your luck endlessly.

When unexpected unpleasant situations arise, learn to keep calm and assess the whole situation before taking action.

This is a very good tool and it will serve you well as a leader, as a group member or as a family member.

Learning to keep things in perspective will ensure you do not derail to more moral damaging activities and help you have faith in your convictions and trust yourself to pull through a situation stronger and better.

#### How do I do this?

##### 1. Take a few deep breaths

Use the 4/7/8 method developed by Dr. Weil to relax and reconnect to your cognition.

Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth and leave it there for the whole exercise.

Inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of 4 with your mouth closed.

Hold your breath for a count of 7. Exhale completely through your mouth to a count of 8.

Keep the ratio and repeat between 4 to 6 times.

## 2. Reverse the stats and think about the reality.

In the grand scheme of things we are nothing, and most of us are likely to be where we are.

Too often we don't realise how privileged we are and how many things we have (both material and immaterial) to allow us to have a good life.

So take a few moments to appreciate your many blessings and then ask yourself if what you are currently living is really that important.

Use a scale system of 1 to 10 to give it a score. 1 being not important at all and 10 being a life or death situation.

Then ask yourself, is this going to impact me in 5 days? 5 months? 5 years?

This is not going to change the way you feel straight away but it will certainly help put it all in perspective and react from a calmer place.

## 3. Be aware, pick yourself up and tell yourself:

*'What doesn't  
kill me can only  
make me  
stronger!'*

## # 5

### BE KIND TO OTHERS AND LEARN TO GIVE BACK

They say good always has a way of coming back to a person who has been good to another; it is the law of karma, what you sow you reap.

Consequently, when you do good to others; the same gesture is reciprocated to you by the person or by another.

Besides, benefiting from your kindness because of the law of karma, being good or helping relatively disadvantaged people, has a way of strengthening us and steeling our minds in the advent of an unpleasant situation.

If one day, you encounter an unpleasant situation that forces you to live in a different way for some time, then your response will not be overly dramatic.

Rather than brood over how your resources have disappeared all of a sudden, you will take solace in the fact that you have something to fall on and work towards regaining and going past lost grounds.

#### How do I do this?

##### 1. Sincerely think 'others'

Tell your family, friends, colleagues why you appreciate them. Try to suspend your judgement and take people with an open mind. Listen with the intention of listening and learning. Smile, you'll feel like a better person.

##### 2. Volunteer some of your time to help others.

Offer some of your skills and expertise, be a mentor, develop others, tutor kids after school etc. Volunteer in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Raise money for charities, participate in 5K runs, bike-a-thons etc. Spend time with elderly people in need.

##### 3. Consider other indirect ways to help others.

Give blood. Become an organ donor. Clean your house and give out unwanted clothes and possessions to charity shops. Check Google, there are so many opportunities around.

## # 6 LEARN TO LET GO

One of the main factors that causes a breakdown in an individual faced with a negative situation or who experiences a negative situation is brooding. When an individual broods over an incident, this can lead to all kinds of negative assumptions, thereby, resulting in breakdown.

To have resilience and to stay resilient, you must learn how not to brood, how not to allow your thoughts to dwell on an incident longer than it is necessary.

To do this, you have to remind yourself that the past can never be relived, therefore, you must forgive yourself and move on with life; however, you move on with lessons learned.

As self-help American writer Guy Finley puts it: 'Nothing in the universe can stop you from letting go and starting over.' It is entirely up to us when the pain of holding onto events should leave.

If you can master the art of letting go, then you are well on your way to becoming truly resilient.

### How do I do this?

There are tons of exercises and techniques from the fields of NLP, EFT, CBT to name only a few that can help you with letting go of unwanted emotions and situations. I have chosen a really simple one.

#### All you need it the following:

A place where you can relax, be alone and speak loudly without being interrupted for about 30 minutes.

A trashcan, a pen, a piece of paper and a small hard object you can hold in the palm of your hand and drop on the floor without creating any damage.

## # 6

### LEARN TO LET GO

Once you have all that, you can sit comfortably and be aware of your body. Take a few deep breaths. When you feel you are relaxed enough.

1 - Observe the situation you want to let go off, the people involved, the thoughts, the actions etc. Experience the emotions as a wave, coming and going. Just accept the emotions, they are not good or bad, they are just emotions. They are not who you are, do not judge them, you are entitled to have these emotions. Do not try to intensify nor reduce them, accept them as they are.

2 - Take the piece of paper and write all the emotions you are experiencing down as well as any words associated with the situation. Put it all down on the paper, you can also draw things if it helps you. Take a good 10 minutes to do this then put the paper aside.

3 - Shake it off, stand up, shrug your shoulders and shake your body.

4 - Sit down and take your small object, hold it in front of you and give it a few hard squeezes. Imagine the object is the situation you are trying to let go off, squeeze it harder until it feels a little painful. This object, like the situation you are dealing with, feels quite uncomfortable but you can get used to it. Now open your hand and gently roll the object in your hand and notice it is not attached to your hand. Like your feelings, they are not attached to you but you decide to hold on to them. Now make the decision to drop the object on the floor. How did it feel? It wasn't difficult to do was it? You just had to choose to drop it. Repeat this a second time and observe how you feel about letting it drop.

5 - Shake it off, stand up, shrug your shoulders and shake your body.

6 - Sit down and take a few deep breaths. Take the piece of paper you put on the side and read aloud all the things you wrote and then, when you are ready, tear it up into pieces and throw it in the trashcan.

7 - Shake it off, stand up, shrug your shoulders and shake your body.

Repeat this process a few times over the next coming weeks.  
You'll be amazed to see how your perception and emotions will change.

## # 7

### EXPRESS HOPE & EXERCISE FAITH

Expressing hope and exercising faith are two actions that can build resilience in a person.

Exercising faith is a characteristic of many religious people who believe in a supreme being. Research has shown that these groups of individuals often relinquish their problems to a higher being thereby causing themselves much needed relief.

Daniel Goleman aptly states this fact in his book on Emotional intelligence. He noted that people with faith or believers often handle negative situations much differently than people without faith. Having faith and hope will not take away your problem or get rid of your emotions but it will help you navigate through them in a more positive manner.

Building your faith does not requires that you believe in a supreme being it could be just a matter of developing a better relationship with your inner self and learning to control your self talk; In other words building faith in yourself.

Can you perhaps remember being in school and having a PE teacher that was pushing you past your comfort level to achieve something that you thought was not possible? Can you remember enduring it and actually doing it?

An astonishing example of having developed an incredible sense of faith in oneself is the story of Ironman finisher Turia Pitt. A fire survivor, who suffered 64% burns and still managed to nurture that silent belief in herself that she was able to move on to accomplish greater things.

Faith and hope keep us motivated, help us put things in perspective and build our resilience.



### How do I do this?

#### 1. Set yourself mini challenges.

Succeeding in achieving mini challenges will help you build your confidence in your skills and abilities and in turn will help you have faith in yourself when being faced with bigger challenges.

#### 2. Do a list of your lifetime achievements.

Start when you were a small kid, and list all the things you were proud of achieving let's say before 5, from 5 to 10, from 10 to 15, etc. slowly moving up towards where you are now. Sometime we are trapped in negative thinking or negative self-talk and it's difficult to remember what we have achieved. Having a list at hand will help you build that faith in yourself.

#### 3. Tackle your negative self-talk.

Whenever you have a negative thought about yourself note it down and apply the following questions to it:

- Check reality: What is the evidence for it? What is the evidence against it?
- Check for alternatives: What else could this mean? What would someone positive see in this?
- Put it in perspective: What's worst and the best things that could happen? Will it matter in 5 years?
- Replace it: Is this way of thinking helping me? What would be a more acceptable way of putting it that would help me?

THE END

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