



# The Art of Bouncing Back: Developing Resilience

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 and more quickly bounce back in a positive way is called resilience.<sup>1</sup>

Resilience refers to the ability to manage stress, adversity, or trauma.<sup>2</sup> It is the ability to “bounce back” more quickly in healthier ways after relationship problems, losing a job, or other life stressors. Resilience is more than a sunny disposition. Some may be born with a temperament that lends itself to more easily manage stress in healthier ways and bounce back from life’s adversity more quickly. The good news is that recent research has shown that resilience is a quality that can be learned. It involves how we think and how we behave. And it takes practice. One way that may help us become more resilient is 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.<sup>1</sup>

**View your  
response to  
life’s events as  
something you  
can control—not  
something that  
controls you.**

But being resilient doesn’t mean ignoring life’s ups and downs. People with resilience take the time to grieve a loss or major life change, in a way that acknowledges emotions, and helps develop coping skills to deal with life, and then move on. When confronted with a similar adverse life event later in life, they can then draw on their coping skills and emotional resources.

Resilience also doesn’t mean pretending stress and pain don’t affect us.<sup>2</sup> Of course they do. Resilience allows us to look past our problems, manage stress, and enjoy life. Resilience can help us recover from a shock or loss in a healthy way. It can help us live with chronic pain, medical condition, or mental illness. A resilient person can meet life’s challenges with increased confidence.<sup>1</sup>

*(continued on next page)*



# The Art of Bouncing Back: Developing Resilience



**Resilience isn't about bottling up emotions or denying painful feelings. Acknowledging these feelings is a healthy way to deal with life.<sup>4</sup>**



## Some Characteristics of a Resilient Person

A resilient person typically is able to resist stress and weather bad times. A resilient person probably has:<sup>4</sup>

- 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
- The ability to use coping skills gained from prior life experiences to deal with present day experiences

## Ways to Develop Resilience

- **Make health a priority.** When you eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep, to better meet life's challenges.<sup>2</sup>
- **Lean on others.** Get support from family and friends in both good and bad times. Socializing with others is important. Some people find that a faith community, volunteer group, or other organized group can be helpful for building a support network.<sup>2</sup>
- **Look to the future.** Keep the current setback in perspective in the long term picture. Set goals and work to meet them to help gain a sense of accomplishment. Be proactive about anticipated changes and make a plan to get through them, focusing on the things that you have the power to control.<sup>3</sup>
- **Learn from mistakes and successes.** Think about how you've handled adversity in the past and learn from what worked and what didn't. What triggers negative emotions? Can coping skills help before problems feel overwhelming?<sup>3</sup>
- **It's okay to feel emotions.** Resilience isn't about bottling up emotions or denying painful feelings. It's okay to take some time to grieve losses and not feel guilty about having emotions. Acknowledging these feelings is a healthy way to deal with life.<sup>4</sup>
- **Accept change.** Change is part of life. When things feel out of control, focus on making realistic changes. This also includes significant people, such as friends and family—who can offer help with ways to make changes.
- **Learn to Trust.** Develop confidence solving problems and overall making positive changes.

Overcoming significant stresses and adversity isn't easy. Licensed counselors or employee assistance programs are available to offer tips to build a resilient attitude. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.<sup>1</sup>

### References

1. American Psychological Association. n.d. "The Road to Resilience." Accessed 8/03/19. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/oct02/pp>
2. June 2019. "Traumatic Stress." Accessed 8/03/19. [helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/traumatic-stress.htm](http://helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/traumatic-stress.htm)  
Opens in a new window
3. Mayo Clinic. May 2017 "Resilience: Build Skills To Endure Hardship." Accessed 8/03/19. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311>
4. American Psychological Association. N.d. Accessed 8.03.19. <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience>