Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Retaining resiliency: maintaining your inner strength amidst life's daily challenges

A looming financial crisis, job insecurity, strife at home, coping with the aftermath of a natural disaster, overcoming a traumatic childhood; we all face "tests" in life that will challenge our inner strength and ability to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and carry on no matter how trying or terrible the situation. But, while some people are forever damaged by a negative event, others are seemingly able to always land on their feet and not only overcome the adversity, but somehow manage to come out of it even stronger.



The good news is that resiliency is something you can continually develop and improve on with every curveball that's thrown your way. The suggestions below help you get through it and move on —regardless of how big or small the setback is.

Focus on the good little things. A recent University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study found that people who focused on the day-to-day moments of positivity were not only happier generally, but better equipped to deal with challenges. What's the theory behind this? People who focused on smaller moments of happiness throughout their day were able to better develop the necessary resources to manage trying times. If you're feeling defeated, fight back and make a list of what you have going for you. Although it can be hard to be thankful, when you're feeling low there is always something to be grateful for. Write down the things in life you're proud of—big or small. Maybe it's your healthy lifestyle, well-adjusted teenagers or your career accomplishments. While you're at it, make a list of your own qualities you're proud of. Do you make people laugh? Are you a fantastic cook? Regularly add to your list and pull it out when you start to feel down.

Reach out. Surrounding yourself with the positive people in your life will offer you a constant source of support when the going gets tough. If you have friends who relentlessly complain about their unappreciative husbands or rigid bosses—don't call them. Instead, focus on building and maintaining relationships with the friends and family members in your life that make you happy and bring out the best in you.

Be good to you. Improving your resiliency has a lot to do with strengthening the way you feel about yourself. Learn new skills and abilities, set and reach goals and get active in the community. The more you learn and the better you do, the more capable and empowered you will feel. You should also take some time to look after your own physical and emotional needs. Eat well, get lots of sleep and participate in activities you enjoy so you're ready when faced with situations that call for resiliency.

Vanquish your inner victim and take action. Focusing on who or what to blame, spending time wishing your problems away or ignoring them all together are all great ways to remain "trapped" in a negative situation. If you don't like something in your life figure out what needs to be done, create a plan and set out to fix it. People who are confident in their ability to solve life's simple issues are better at managing the bigger ones. If your child is diagnosed with a learning disability, instead of asking, "why him?" work on the things you can control. Find your son a tutor, enrol him in activities he enjoys and give him as much positive reinforcement as possible. Resilient people don't see themselves as

victims or dwell on issues, they find solutions. Just make sure that you're able to distinguish between the things you can and cannot change.

Get mad. When faced with an unexpected challenge you're bound to be upset. Recognize that these feelings are valid and natural and give yourself a bit of time to be angry. Holding in your emotions and denying yourself your natural reactions will only cause bigger problems in the future. Go ahead and get angry, but after that it's time to look up and seek out constructive ways to deal with these emotions.

Laugh. There are a lot of problems in life that call for your serious energy and attention. But, there are also lots that just don't. Save your stress and energy for the big stuff and try to find the humour in a manageable situation. Encourage yourself to laugh by watching a funny movie or spending time with a hilarious friend and always remember that laughter truly is the best medicine.

Seek help. Becoming more resilient takes time, effort and practice. If you're feeling sad, anxious, hopeless or unmotivated and just can't seem to bounce back, consider talking to a mental health professional. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) also offers services that can help you make peace with the past, deal with difficult emotions and find better ways to handle life's ups and downs.

Being resilient doesn't mean that daily challenges will no longer affect you or that you will suddenly have every answer to life's many problems. It also doesn't mean you won't be sad when a relationship ends or terrified when you lose your job. Building resiliency is about helping yourself find better, healthier ways of coping with problems so you can emerge even stronger than ever before.

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