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

Resilience readiness: Checklist for building and maintaining resilience



Life is full of great highs that bring us joy as well as great lows that can have profoundly negative effects on us. Just how negative depends on our resilience – our ability to face and cope with life's challenges without acting in a dysfunctional way. Being resilient doesn't mean we're not upset about a change or an event, it simply means we find healthy, effective ways to deal with things when they do happen.

There are some of us who are naturally resilient thanks to a combination of temperament and upbringing, but most of us have to build our resilience by learning from experience and finding what coping strategies work best for us. These strategies begin by making small adjustments to our mindset and our lifestyle.

Adjusting our mindset

Highly resilient people share certain personality traits, including positivity, flexibility and the ability to regulate their emotions. We can strengthen our resilience by developing some of these traits including:

- **Optimism**. Try to see the positive in every situation and in yourself. Don't say, "This could only happen to me!" Instead think, "I can and will, get through this." Life may have changed but it is not over.
- **Keeping things in perspective.** Try not to blow things out of proportion and overreact. Avoid catastrophic thinking – imagining or dwelling on the worst possible scenarios.
- **Maintaining a sense of humor.** Not losing the ability to laugh and see the lighter side of life helps bolster optimism as well as keep things in perspective.

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- **Accepting that change is inevitable.** Whether we like it or not, change is part of life. Rather than resisting unavoidable change, try to channel your energies into the things you can control.
- **Learning from setbacks.** Use adverse situations to develop your problem-solving and coping skills. Look back on previous times of adversity and ask yourself what you did right and what you could have done better.
- **Keeping an open mind.** Be flexible to new solutions to coping and dealing with tough times.

Adjusting your lifestyle

Resilient people also DO similar things to help them weather difficult situations. Simple lifestyle adjustments can help you do the same.

- **Create a support system.** Having family members or close friends with whom you can share feelings, discuss problems, and receive advice is an essential part of weathering life's ups and downs.
- **Be in control.** Take decisive actions rather than hoping the problem will go away or that others will resolve the situation. For example, if you're feeling overwhelmed with debt, meet with a financial advisor and make a realistic step-by-step plan to tackle the situation.
- **Take care of yourself.** Keep your body and mind ready to deal with stressful situations by eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and finding time to do things you enjoy.
- **Find healthy ways to manage your stress.** Go to the gym, take a walk, enjoy a yoga class -- whatever helps quiet your mind and relax your body. Meditation has been shown to be extremely beneficial in building resilience and managing stress.
- **Volunteer.** Helping others increases our sense of self-worth and is also another way to help put our problems into perspective and develop a great support system.
- **Practice gratitude.** It's easy to become angry, resentful or even despondent when life throws you a curveball. Reminding yourself of what's good in your life can help you remain calm and focused on getting through tough times. Many people find it helpful to keep a gratitude journal in which they write down a certain number of things they are thankful for every day.
- **Ask for help.** A key component to resilience is know when to reach out for support. If you're feeling overwhelmed by a problem or situation, contact your family doctor or your Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

We may get knocked down by adversity from time to time but being resilient means we bounce back and carry on stronger, wiser, and more confident in our abilities to deal with both good times and bad.