



Understanding and Building Resilience

Resiliency is the new “buzz” word moving through many different fields and professionals from trauma and stress, to academic success to the workplace. But what is resiliency exactly and why is it important?

Resiliency is defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness, the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; coming from the Latin word *resilire*, meaning "to jump back" or "to recoil."

In relation to people, it is the ability to cope under pressure. A person who copes well under pressure is resilient. Research suggests that the ability to cope well under pressure is based on a positive outlook, combined with strategies to manage pressure.

Why is this important? Are we born with resilience or do we need to create it?

Research tells us two things:

- 1) Resiliency is important because it allows us to cope with everyday stress and more catastrophic events, both of which occur in our lives from childhood. If we are able to be resilient and “jump back” from these challenging events we will be able to move forward to a positive healthy emotionally stable life. However, without resiliency even the most minor and short - lived stress can leave us in chronic, debilitating emotional chaos unable to function and move forward.
- 2) We are born with the tools to be resilient but need to cultivate them with the help of resilient people in our lives in order to utilize them effectively and enhance the ability to “Jump back” from stressful and catastrophic situations to a more positive, calm and pleasant life.

It is through “Resilient” behaviors that we manage the pressure and control any stress in our lives.

These include the following which can be cultivated through support and practice:

- Learning ways to get along with the people around you
- Developing a problem-solving approach to difficulty
- Maintaining a sense of perspective (and humor) when things go wrong
- Being flexible and willing to adapt to change and to learn
- Meeting new situations, new people and new demands with a positive attitude
- Drawing on a range of strategies to help you cope with pressure
- Recognizing your thoughts and emotions – and managing them, asking for help as needed
- Being willing to persevere when the going gets tough
- Recognizing and respecting your own limits, including what you can control and what you cannot.

We all have the ability to develop resilient traits and skills to improve our lives. We also all need support and assistance in challenging situations to draw on and implement those resilient skill sets. Children, because of their vulnerability, are especially in need of stable, consistent adults for guidance and support.

Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.
(Nelson Mandela)