

How to Boost Your Resilience

The following 10 steps will help you become more resilient.

Visualize success

Resilient people create their own vision of success. This helps them achieve their goals by providing a clear sense of where they're headed. Your vision needs to be rounded and vibrant and based on what is currently possible; resilient people don't waste time on impossible dreams or hankering after things they'll never have. They recognize the fine line between stretching goals and unrealistic goals.

Boost your self-esteem

- Some people are naturally blessed with high self-esteem. Others – perhaps most of us – need to work on self-esteem, which involves understanding where it comes from and what makes you feel good about yourself. The checklist below may help.
- Identify what you're good at. What can you feel positive about?
- Remind yourself of these things regularly.
- Recognize what other people appreciate about you.
- Allow others to praise you, and resist the temptation to brush compliments aside.
- When something goes wrong try to avoid beating yourself up unnecessarily; others will undoubtedly do it first!
- Don't compare yourself with other people.
- When things go well for others feel genuinely pleased for them.
- Enjoy it when something goes better than you thought it would.
- Praise yourself.

Take control

Resilient people believe they can make a difference and be successful. Others suffer from unhelpful beliefs, or 'drag anchors'. Here are 6 of the most common:

I am the victim of my personal history – Your past must have an impact but is no excuse for not improving yourself now.

There's so much to do it's not even worth trying – Life is complex, and you now have to do more with less. As a result, you may come to believe there are simply so many imperatives that you can't see where to start. Psychologists call this 'agglomeration' – feeling overwhelmed by the volume and complexity of the issues. Break the problem down, establish priorities and take first things first.

You only get one shot – Occasionally this may be the case, but not often – especially in circumstances where even the experts can't predict the right way to go. It then becomes a question of trial and error, always being alert to the worst-case scenario and unintended consequences.

There's a right answer to everything – Analysts dream that by scrutinizing data hard enough, the 'correct' answer will emerge. This rarely happens in real life. The danger is that analysis becomes a substitute for, rather than a prelude to, action.

I'm on my own – It's easy to believe that you are the only one suffering and that you have to weather the storm alone. The old adage 'a problem shared is a problem halved' works well in these circumstances; talking things through is a source of strength, not a sign of weakness.

This isn't fair – Doctors claim that perpetrators of crimes heal more quickly than their victims. More generally, if you believe you have in some way contributed to a problem, you may feel more motivated to resolve it. If you are not to blame you tend to dwell on the unfairness of the situation rather than on what can be done.

Slip these drag anchors by **reframing**. Recognize when your thinking is negative and immediately turn it around so that it becomes positive. -----

Become more optimistic

Optimism is one of the most important characteristics of resilient people; it is vitally important to look on the bright side, have confidence in your own abilities, and salvage what you can from problematic situations. Even those who lean towards the glass-half-empty mindset can learn.

Manage stress

Psychologists see stress as an energizing force – up to a point, beyond which it becomes debilitating. Highly resilient people have a higher tipping point and, when things threaten to get them down, they know how to deal with it. Sources of stress are unique to you: to boost your resilience, you need to identify what your stressors are and how to counteract them. There are also personality traits that make some individuals more stress-prone. Look at the list below. If you tend towards any of these, discipline yourself to reduce or eliminate them:

- Displaying hostility
- Hiding feelings
- Being unable to listen properly
- Being over-perfectionist
- Having difficulty relaxing
- Being generally critical

Stress management falls into 2 categories – distraction and resolution. Distraction techniques include exercise, breathing deeply, walking or extracting yourself from the situation. Resolution is focused on solving the problem.

Improve decision-making

Resilience requires you to make rather than avoid decisions. Resilient people trust their own judgement, but aren't afraid to challenge their minds. They know that decisions are rarely irreversible and that procrastination is the enemy of resilience. Understanding your preferred decision-making approach is a critical step towards building resilience. Tips for shifting your style are given below.

Becoming more intuitive – Build experience – understand your decision-making shortcuts – trust your gut – establish the worst-case scenario – take a risk – learn

Becoming more rational – Stand back/don't rush to judgement – gather data – talk to the relevant parties – establish criteria – use a rational process – 'sense check' the answer

Ask for help

You don't have to do this alone; resilient people know when to reach out to others – and who is best to turn to. Do you have this strength of network? If not, map it out. Draw a circle on a sheet of paper – this is you. Draw your network, with others depicted as circles too: the more important they are to you, the larger the circle; the stronger the relationship, the closer they are to you. Draw lines linking you to others and others to one another, dotted lines for indirect relationships. Consider what you want from them and what you can offer and add this to the map. What actions do you need to take to get and give support?

Deal with conflict

Conflict occurs when our views differ from those of another person – so we have to deal with conflict every day. The ability to handle it constructively is an important part of resilience – ensuring that the style of resolution is appropriate, given the nature of the conflict and the other party. The 'Conflict Resolution' panel below gives examples and suggested tactics.

Nature of problem

Although I'm annoyed, it's a trivial matter

My solution is better than the other person's but their approach could work.

This is important, something that requires a well-thought-through solution. I have strong views but so does the other person.

I'm convinced I'm right and the other person is wrong.

Possible approach

This is one to let drop – get over it.

It's not worth fighting over. Win credit for your flexibility.

Honest, constructive talking and listening. Collaborate to find a solution acceptable to both parties.

Use your powers of influence and persuasion. Sell the benefits of your idea or say it's the way it has to be – but in a way that preserves your relationship.

Learn

Thinking regularly about what lessons can be drawn from your experience strengthens your 'learning muscle' and helps you build resilience. Figure out how you learn best and take the most from the experiences life throws at you.

Be yourself

You may be determined to enhance your resilience but you won't succeed if your plan for doing this offends your core identity and values. The most resilient leaders are as self-aware as they are self-confident!

Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire