

 A MORE RESILIENT YOU

MODULE 01



**UNDERSTANDING
RESILIENCE**

The American Psychological Association's Dictionary of Psychology defines resilience as "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands."

In simpler terms, resilience is the ability to recover from a setback quickly.

Those with little resilience allow themselves to drown in the negativity associated with the setback. They struggle to overcome it and allow it to impact other areas of their lives. Conversely, some people thrive in the face of adversity with such resilience that they recover from difficulty stronger and more capable than before they experienced the setback.

The APA points out that research shows you can cultivate resilience. It's a skill you can develop and strengthen through practice. If you fall into the first group above, you can move to the second group with practice.

THE 7 C'S OF RESILIENCE

Resilience is comprised of seven characters or attributes. By strengthening each of these principles, you become resilient and able to face life's challenges with minimal damage.

1. Competence

Your competence grows as you push yourself to learn new things and challenge yourself with new experiences. Seek opportunities for professional and personal development and growth. The more you push your boundaries, the more adaptable and resilient you become.

2. Confidence

When you are confident, you believe in your ability to overcome obstacles. You know you have the strength to recover from any difficulty, and you view setbacks as learning experiences and opportunities. The more you practice resilience, the more your confidence grows.

3. Connection

Everyone needs a caring support network. Sometimes, even the strongest and most capable people need help recovering from failure, loss, or other hardships. The connections you make in your personal and professional circles can support you in times of need, giving you a form of assisted resilience.

4. Character

Positive characteristics such as honesty, integrity, and empathy build strong character. Ethics and integrity characterize the most resilient individuals. They have strong personal values, and their actions align with those values. Work on strengthening your core character.

5. Contribution

Volunteer, join a charitable organization, and seek ways to help others improve your community. You can find purpose and meaning through your work to contribute to the common good. This positive experience improves your resilience.

6. Coping

At its foundation, resilience is about coping with what has happened so you suffer as little as possible. Learning stress management and coping strategies will help strengthen your resilience.

7. Control

This fundamental principle of resilience is all about what you can control. Focusing on what you influence instead of factors beyond your control gives you ownership of your recovery. Channel your energy towards the one thing you can control: how you respond to any experience.

Embrace these seven principles of resilience. They help you grow your ability to recover from hardship and thrive in adversity.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND RESILIENCE

Resilience is like having a life scale. On one side, you have the coping mechanisms, experiences, skills, and recovery resources accumulated through life. On the other hand, exterior influences and your habits and behaviors create negative experiences. The goal is to ensure the coping abilities outweigh the negative experiences.

Your genetic makeup gives you a resilience starting point as a child. You are predisposed to respond in a certain way to adverse life events. Certain practices can influence your natural response. They boost your resilience by changing your brain circuitry so you respond more positively to stress, anxiety, and difficult situations. We'll discuss these later in the course.

The Neuroscience of Resilience

Why do some people respond to stress with more resilience than others? This question has been puzzling neuroscientists for decades. We once thought you inherited the human stress response through your family tree, and it could not be changed. We understand now that even though you had a genetic blueprint for your resilience when you were born, that blueprint can be changed.

Resilient people have a stronger connection between the prefrontal cortex and the emotional control centers of their brains, and they are more capable of managing their emotions than most people.

Your prefrontal cortex controls your emotions and helps you make decisions. You activate this part of your brain when deciding how to respond to the emotional impact of hardship or trauma.

The hippocampus in resilient people forms a strong connection with the limbic system and your brain's central executive network (CEN). Your CEN helps you make decisions, retrieve memories, take action to achieve your goals and direct your attention. This part of your brain is related to memory and learning. It is malleable and influenced by your response to physical, mental, or emotional hardship.

Your amygdala, part of your limbic system, also plays a part in this relationship. It helps you process information and make decisions based on how it assesses potential threats and dangers. The amygdala focuses on failure, loss, trauma, and other difficulties.

These three influential areas of your brain work together to create your resilience response. They absorb whatever difficulty you are experiencing and then reorganize and reprogram themselves and other brain networks in response to stress.

The more you test your resilience, the stronger it becomes. Your brain rewards your efforts by delivering feel-good chemicals and hormones that promote positive emotions like happiness.

This scientific process makes you feel good about working to recover from life's difficulties.

How Your Body Responds to Obstacles

Stress is a natural response when your basic senses perceive a threat to your well-being. Your body prepares for a fight-or-flight scenario. The parts of your brain associated with memory, learning, and decision-making use your past experiences and knowledge to decide what action to take, and you respond physically to this threat.

Because your brain uses your experiences and knowledge to influence its decisions, the more you practice building your resilience, the stronger it becomes. You learn how to overcome difficult situations and thrive in the face of hardship.

Over time, you begin to see obstacles as avenues of personal growth that can make you more capable, help you develop new skills, and strengthen your resilience.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING RESILIENT

Being able to control stress and bounce back from adversity has its rewards. First and foremost, life's inevitable difficulties don't keep you down for long. Here are some additional benefits of resilience you may have yet to consider.

- You develop problem-solving skills.
- Resilience lowers your risk of developing severe mental health conditions.
- You are less likely to engage in risky behavior.
- Practicing resilience boosts your immune system.
- You enjoy improved learning ability, memory development, and recall.
- Your self-confidence grows, and your self-image improves.
- Stress reduces and becomes more manageable.
- You recover from hardship in the best possible way.
- You develop healthy, rewarding professional and personal relationships.
- Science shows resilient people live longer, happier, and more fulfilling lives.

Those are some significant benefits that can improve your life.

COMMON MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT RESILIENCE

We live in an information age. The average person has access to more information than ever before. Unfortunately, this means a lot of incorrect and potentially harmful information is just a click away.

Refrain from believing the following half-truths, myths, and misconceptions about resilience that can lead to a poor experience.

You Are Either Resilient or Not

While you may not be resilient right now, resilience is a skill anyone can develop. Resilience is dynamic and always changing. You must constantly work to adapt to challenges, or your resilience can suffer.

Resilient People Don't Need Help

Individuals with a high level of resilience can often weather life's storms on their own. That doesn't mean they never need help. A strong support network enhances resilience at all levels.

Resilience Is All About Managing Stress

Stress management is an important aspect of resilience but not the only component. Resilient people practice confidence, develop the persistence to keep going during difficult times, and face adversity with a positive outlook. Resilience benefits from positive self-talk, reframing negative thoughts, thinking positively, and being self-aware, not just from managing stress.

Resilient People Have Thick Skin

Some people believe that resilience makes a person resistant to negative emotions. That's not the case. Resilient people hurt just like the rest of us. Their superpower is their ability to recover from painful emotions and return to normalcy quickly.

Resilience Focuses on Managing Tough Emotions

Resilient people understand that managing the impact of negative emotions is essential. Resilience grows when you cultivate as many positive emotions and experiences as possible. You become more resilient when you manage difficult feelings and foster positive emotions.