

Building Resiliency

Events such as a tragedy or natural disaster are never expected. They can cause a person great emotional stress. Over time the stress may go away. A person recovers or heals. But sometimes they do not. There are things that may set off a memory of such an event. It may be the day it occurred. Or a story about the topic. It could even be a song.

The recovery process begins after an event happens. It can take days or years to heal.

Some people are more resilient than others. Resiliency is being able to rebound from traumatic events. It can be summarized by seven characteristics. These are developed over time. They are based on life experiences. Parents can help their children be more resilient.

Seven characteristics of a resilient personality

- **Self-aware.** A resilient person is more aware than others in a stressful situation. They understand what is causing their reaction or behavior. They can usually maintain control of their emotions.
- **Flexible to change.** People react differently to change and trauma. Those who are flexible understand that life is unpredictable. They know it can be difficult. Some problems can be controlled and avoided. Other problems cannot. Being open and flexible allows a person to be adaptable and more resilient.
- **Internal control.** People look at situations differently. Some feel that things happen because someone else did wrong. Others may think things happen because of something they did. A resilient person can identify their role in a situation.
- **Good at solving problems.** A resilient person usually can identify a solution in a crisis. They have the ability to stay calm. They can do this during and after a crisis. They know that the best way to help is by reaching out to those around them.
- **Strong connections to others.** Dealing with a crisis requires a strong support system. Talking about the challenges can help. Gaining a perspective from others can also help someone be more resilient.
- **Is a survivor not a victim.** Resilient people view themselves as survivors. They do not think they are victims. They know it takes time for healing to occur.
- **Asks for help when needed.** Resiliency cannot be achieved alone. A resilient person knows when to reach out for help.

How to help you and your family become more resilient.

- **Be positive.** Positive people are more likely to overcome stress. Recovery is also more likely when a person is positive. Remind yourself of your strengths. Know that good can come out of a tragedy.
- **Find your purpose.** It takes time to heal after any stressful event. Finding a sense of purpose can help recovery. Seek out different community groups. Volunteer to help others. Do something that is meaningful to you. That will help you heal.
- **Accept change.** Resilient people are flexible. You can become more flexible by understanding that things do not stay the same. You need to accept change.
- **Be good to yourself.** People who are stressed do not take care of their own needs. Be sure to get enough sleep. Eat a well-balanced diet. Take a break from things that cause stress. Prepare for stress that can occur on the date an event occurred. Or when other events bring back memories. You may need more support at these times.
- **Find ways to solve problems.** People who can solve problems quickly cope best. When change occurs, make a list of ways that you can solve the problem.
- **Set a goal.** After a stressful event, set short-term goals. If it becomes too much, step back and look at your goals again. Think about your plan.
- **Do not give up.** It takes time to build resiliency. When something occurs, make a list of things you can work on to adapt.

Building recovery and resiliency takes time. It takes energy and emotion. Use your strengths. Be aware of your reactions. Over time, you may find that you react better than you did before.

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