

Building Resiliency

Imagine the last upsetting event that you experienced. What was your reaction to it? Were you able to quickly recover from it and get back on track, or do bad experiences throw you into emotional tailspins that affect your quality of life long after they've occurred?

How quickly you are able to bounce back from setbacks is a trait called resiliency. People who are highly resilient tend to be happier and more successful both in their careers and in their personal lives. Things like dealing with an unreasonable boss, a tight deadline, or a car breakdown can be a challenge for anyone, but the resulting stress is caused by our reaction to these problems, not the problems themselves.

By paying careful attention to your emotional reactions to upsetting events, you'll be able to spot unwanted and habitually negative scripts that play themselves out in your head, and gradually replace them with positive ones:

Negative scripts:

- “This is going to be a disaster.”
- “These delays are killing me.”
- “It's impossible.”

Positive scripts:

- “I'll do the best I can with what I have.”
- “I'll use this extra time to get organized.”
- “Success might not come immediately.”

Dwelling on a negative emotion, such as anger at being treated unfairly, compromises our time, energy, and creativity and prevents us from moving forward constructively. Resilient people often view obstacles and setbacks as “outcomes,” “challenges,” and

“opportunities” to learn rather than disasters. More importantly, they anticipate success, but expect setbacks as a natural part of any goal-oriented process.

Here are some tips for building resiliency:

Know yourself: Be realistic about what you are able to accomplish, and be honest about your limitations. Set your goals accordingly, but don't be afraid to stretch to the higher rung, and then build on your successes.

Know your partners: Focus on the strengths, not the weaknesses, of those around you. Always be looking for ways that their unique talents can complement yours or help you to accomplish your goals.

Think – and re-think – strategy, planning, and action: You are in control of how you deal with a problem to produce a result. You can't predict a result, but you can act again on the result to produce a different outcome, and so on. Unexpected variables show up as we reach for our goals, so measure success by small steps toward your goals.

Treat life as a classroom: A helpful question to ask yourself in any challenging situation is, “What can I learn from this?” Remember, temporary failures almost always precede future success.

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