

Resilience—Thriving Through Tough Times

How is stress like carrying a glass of water?

A psychologist walked around a room while teaching stress management to an audience. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the "half empty or half full" question. Instead, with a smile on her face, she inquired: "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers called out ranged from 8 oz. to 20 oz. She replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, my arm will feel numb and paralyzed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes." She continued, "The stresses and worries in life are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while, and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you will feel paralyzed – incapable of doing anything." It's important to remember to let go of your stresses. As early in the evening as you can, put all your burdens down. Don't carry them through the evening and into the night. Remember to put the glass down! (Source unknown)

What is resilience?

- Bouncing back when things are tough
- Surviving & thriving
- Growing stronger through difficulties
- Not a characteristic one either has or does not have
- Is a capacity that can be deliberately learned & fostered
- It can be a lifestyle

What ways can you strengthen your resilience?

The reality is that many of the things we can do to strengthen our resilience we already know. But sometimes we forget to keep doing them, especially when times get tough.

Physical/Health Abilities

- Eat well/have healthy snacks/drink water
- Sleep a full night
- Exercise/move regularly
- Remember to breathe deeply
- Practice muscle tension relaxation exercises
- Take time for short breaks/rest

Emotional Capacities

- Don't stuff your feelings
- Allow tears & laughter
- Plan future fun
- Identify what you are feeling
- Find ways to express your feelings
- Do something you fear every day – bold, brave, capable

Spirituality

- Practice Gratitude A-Z
- Read something inspirational
- Find meaning in the hard times
- Spend time in prayer/meditation

Cognitive Abilities

- Our thoughts become our reality
- Complaining magnifies problems
- Focus on what's good right now
- Worry well—identify what you can & can't control
- Write in a journal
- Read encouraging reading/quotes
- Limit media exposure

Education/Experience

- Are you learning anything from this situation?
 - About yourself?
 - About others?
- How are you stronger now?
- Think of challenges as on the job training

Social support

- Find and be a good friend
- Talk with friends or a counselor
 - To clarify your thinking
 - Reduce isolation
 - Get feedback
- Ask for & give help
- Share vulnerabilities

Self-esteem

- Treat yourself & others with respect
- Do things you like to do
- Spend time with people who admire you
- Feel proud of your successes & celebrate!
- Make time for fun

Personality

- Know yourself
- Know what you need to keep your energy up
- Create your own comfort zone

Resilience—Worksheet

My preparation to strengthen my resilience and cope well under stress includes the following actions:

1. Improving Health & Abilities
2. Expanding Emotional Capacity
3. Developing Cognitive Abilities
4. Continuing Education & Experience
5. Accessing Community & Family Support
6. Developing Self-Esteem
7. Maintaining Spiritual Connections
8. Knowing My Own Personality

Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain.

—Vivian Greene