

How To Assess (and Improve) Your Resiliency

Resiliency, simply put, is the ability to ‘bounce back’ after difficult events or situations. How well we are able to handle adversities in our life depends on a lot of factors. Past experiences (both positive and negative), your values, social support, and your coping skills all have an effect on your level of resiliency. Being resilient to life events has a big impact on your emotional (and physical) well-being.

As a licensed mental health therapist and life management coach, I often notice how resiliency affects a person’s overall health and outlook on life in general. I see it as a process. We all are born with a temperament and as we experience life, we can see things in a neutral, positive, or negative tone. With practice, and developing an awareness of how our perceptions become our realities, we can change the way we think about events in our life and can build our resiliency toward them, leading to a healthier outlook on life, and therefore, a more fulfilling and happier life.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to see if you are resilient:

- Do you practice regular self-care? (this includes exercising, having a work/play balance, making healthy food choices, making healthy life choices)
- Do you have a good support system and connectedness to others?
- Do you see yourself as a survivor/thriver instead of a victim, if there has been trauma in your life?
- Do you have a sense of spirituality? This includes being grateful for what you have and accepting/forgiving yourself.
- Do you help others in need/volunteer?
- Do you have good problem-solving skills?
- Do you take responsibility for your actions instead of blaming others?
- Do you live in the present, instead of worrying about the future or ruminating about the past?
- Do you have a positive outlook on life?
- Do you see opportunities when there are disappointments/losses?
- Do you seek help and guidance from others when needed?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, then you have a healthy dose of resilience. If not, you can practice how to change the way you think about certain things since you have control of your thoughts and not someone else’s thoughts or behaviors. This does not mean that you have to accept things that are hurtful to you and be OK with them. It simply means that you can change the way those things are affecting you by seeing them in a different way and practicing the above behaviors.

For example, I had a client who was feeling used by her older children and her husband. She grew up with abusive parents and learned to avoid expressing her feelings so she wouldn’t get hit. She didn’t take care of herself and used food as a way of comfort, binging on junk food since her teens. It was difficult for her to ‘bounce back’ when things weren’t going well. She allowed her family to take advantage of her and she was building up a lot of anger and resentment from this.

Through coaching, she started taking more control of her life and was able to build her confidence by becoming more assertive with her family, learning to say 'no' to unreasonable demands and delegating household responsibilities to others instead of doing everything herself. She started having 'me' time and began practicing positive affirmations every morning, telling herself she was beautiful and important. She was becoming more resilient, and gradually built a good support system outside of her family who encouraged her to continue practicing self-care. Even though she started out in her marriage feeling 'less than' and seeing a negative outlook on life, she was able to turn her thoughts around by practicing things that created a higher level of resiliency for her. She became much happier in her relationships and her emotional and physical health improved.

The beauty of resiliency is that it can be developed through your journey to better health. By taking steps to improve your level of resiliency, you will find yourself feeling more peaceful and happier with yourself and others around you.

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