## What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to use various tools in life in order to successfully adapt to difficult or challenging life experiences and the flexibility of life. It can protect individuals from its effects and increase their ability to regain a sense of control in their life. Researchers (Boniwell & Tunariu) discovered that the three factors essential to resilience are recovery, resistance, and reconfiguration. Recovery is the returning to normality or the pre-stressor level of functioning.

Resistance is the little to no signs of disturbance following the stressor. Reconfiguration is the redefining of life after hardships, meaning you’re able to find a new life path with different standards, goals and expectations. Reconfiguration is the most essential part of resilience because it's the ability to move past surviving, and helps you thrive in life through maintaining a different homeostasis and finding a new sense of stability in terms of the changes in the situation.

## How can you become resilient?

The Resilience Factor (Reivich & Shatté,2002) expressed that resilience can be strengthened by first understanding and breaking down the mental aspects in which we experience when faced with tough situations.

The first step is described as learning your ABC’s, an acronym of the first steps you take when learning how to detect your thoughts when you are experiencing adversity within the moment and how to understand how impactful these emotional beliefs can be.

* **A**dversities are events that trigger a reaction from us. They range from being big, such as losing a job or experiencing rejection or small, such as being underestimated, arguing with a friend. You must first identify the adversities you experience in life that challenge your resilience. When we are confronted with adversities that provoke our emotions, we’re more likely to deviate from staying calm because our thinking becomes dreary, thus making our problem solving skills lackluster. Through resilience, we can strengthen our ability to not let adversities go. Taking a step back to realize which adversities you tend to be the most affected by, whether they’re personal, professional, and have different themes such as time management, dealing with authority and how they make you feel, is a good way to gain insight and prevent them from getting underneath your skin.
* **B**eliefs are the thoughts about events that have an influence on how we feel and the behavior we act out, since it shapes the quality and intensity of our feelings. A good way at understanding how your beliefs have an impact on your behavior is through understanding the various types of emotions. Ticker tape beliefs are thoughts one might think to themselves when in a moment of adversity, which are sometimes outside of your awareness. Ticker tape beliefs trajectories you onto an emotional state of being that could either facilitate your ability to handle a situation or can debilitate your ability to handle the situation. Ticker tape beliefs vary among people, the predominant ones fall into two categories : “Why Beliefs” and “What Next Beliefs?”
  + “Why Beliefs” is the act of thinking that focuses on the past as a way to search for a reason as to why the adversity happened. Asking ourselves why helps us reassess the situation and increase the likelihood of reading our goals. When you

listen to your beliefs, it’s important to start to look for patterns. Patterns such as if you tend to blame yourself or others in the face of adversity? Do you believe that the cause of the adversity will derail everything else in your life, or is the cause specific to the adversity?

* + “What Next Beliefs” is the beliefs you make about what adversity means for you and the other person in the future. Similar to “Why Beliefs” It’s important to analyze our beliefs to understand if they’re truly helping us. When listening to your beliefs, look to see if there's any patterns. Patterns such as if you believe that the future due this adversity will be bleak? Do you believe that you could have done anything differently or if the other person could have acted differently?
* Strengthening your ability to label your beliefs, the easier it'll be to change them in order to aid your response to adversity.
* **C** is the way you feel during an adversity and what you do within that moment. Part of building resilience is learning how to regulate your emotions and control your reactions so that you’re able to respond appropriately to any given situation.
* The second step is to avoid eight common thinking traps.
  + Jumping to conclusions : Making assumptions without any relevant data, which can lead to beliefs based on the negative emotions you feel. Instead of believing beliefs as ideas, it’s best to think of them as theories.
  + Tunnel vision : Focusing on the negative aspects of your environments and assuming the worst. Your views on your environment are biased, which causes her to draw incorrect conclusions.
  + Magnifying and Minimizing : Magnifying the negatives and minimizing the positives, or vise versa. Neither is good because magnifying the negatives causes you to overvalue negative aspects of the adversity and undervalue the positive aspects of the situation. Magnifying the positives may male you believe that there is no need for change in your life and the negative aspect of the adversity was nothing that requires self reflection.
  + Personalizing : The reflective tendency to associate problems to one’s own doing. Such as, if you think that you associate the cause of the problem to yourself, then you give yourself the power to solve it. However, this only allows you to see the internal cause of the problem and ignore the external causes.
  + Externalizing : The external tendency to blame others when something goes wrong. This type of thinking is unable to locate the aspects of the adversity that is genuinely of their doing and within their control.
  + Overgeneralizing : The broad assumption that an experience from one event will apply to other events within your life. It causes you to think that one experience will define how your other experiences in your life will go.
  + Mind Reading : The belief that we know what people around us are thinking, or believe that other people are aware of what we’re thinking.
  + Emotional reasoning : Drawing false conclusions about the nature of the world due to the emotional state you’re currently in.
* The last step described by Reivich & Shatté is detecting icebergs, deep beliefs we hold about how you feel as if the world should operate, or a strong belief of who you are.

While some are good “Everyone deserves to be treated equally” some are negative and make dealing with adversities difficult “I am not worthy of love if I make mistakes”. When a ticker tape belief is unable to explain the intensity of your reaction to a situation, it's due to the underlying belief evoking emotions that come off as extremely intense and may even feel like the wrong a motion for the situation. These “icebergs” are usually outside our awareness, existing deep beneath our consciousness, but mastering the skill of detecting icebergs can help you identify how these beliefs are harmful. It could be because they are activated at unexpected times which leads to inappropriate emotions and reactions, creates difficulty for making decisions and can cause you to constantly fall into the same emotional patterns. Detecting icebergs makes you aware of the beliefs that are troublesomely causing you to overreact in a way that is different from what your ticker tape belief would predict. You can control this by breaking down your experience into the facts of the situation through an activity such as journaling, and ask yourself thought provoking questions that make you wonder why, such as “What was the worst part of that for me?”, “What was something I could learn from this?” “What was the most upsetting part of this event to me?” “What does this say about me?”. Asking what questions as opposed to why could direct us into describing the meaning of our beliefs more fully, as opposed to questions which makes us defensive. Through this, you can identify deep beliefs that interfere with your ability to respond efficiently to adversity. But through this approach, you can begin the process of changing the icebergs that are blocking your path.

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# Other Ways to become Resilient

* Practicing self care
  + Self care allows us to develop a healthier mindset and reduce stress levels, which helps with overall emotional resilience. When we engage in activities that reduce stress, such as taking a walk or engaging in hobbies that we enjoy, we are able to allow your mind to rest and recharge. Tending to your mental needs by physical activism allows for a healthy output for the stress which can help the levels of stress decrease.
* Practicing acceptance
  + Learning to understand and integrate our emotions allows us to strip it of its power to work against us. Using flexibility to respond to our emotional experiences can help us grow towards growth rather than remain stagnant.
* Nurture strong relationships
  + Through connections and social support, we have a space for vulnerability, a sense of safety, new perspectives and a developing sense of self awareness.
* Prioritize physical health
  + Physical health can help cope better with stress and recover faster from illness or fatigue
* Develop problem solving skills
  + Problem solving skills can help us effectively manage our emotions by evaluating the effectiveness to potential solutions and choosing to act on the most appropriate course of action.
* Maintain perspective
  + Being able to acknowledge your feelings around a situation, but also take into account the bigger picture to help you prevent getting overwhelmed
* Professional help
  + Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a form of therapy that helps individuals identify unhelpful thoughts and learn self help strategies. Through this practice of challenging one’s maladaptive thoughts through teaching coping strategies with the intentions to help get through difficult situations, it creates the ability of coping and cognitive flexibility.

## What is the Neuroscience Behind Resilience?

Well for starters, let's break down what neuroscience is. Neuroscience is the study of how the nervous system develops, what it does, and its structure. Neuroscientists' primary focus is the brain and how behavior and cognitive functions have an impact on it.

Research has shown that when stressful and traumatic events occur in someone’s life, so does some degree of resilience to said events despite there being a variety of lasting pathologies, the structural and functional changes that not only cause the disease, but has an effect on it, that comes with these events.

The brain is the principal organ for the identification and response for stress thus making it a target for stressful events with the structure and function that adapts to it. In an attempt to mediate these effects, brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) and cortisol is released throughout the brain. BDNF is essential for neuronal development, maintenance, survival and differentiation. Cortisol is a hormone that helps regulate your body’s response to stress.

However, studies of gene expression and epigenetics suggest that the recovery of structural markers is not the entire explanation as to how the brain reacts to stress. Studies show that resilience itself may reflect an ever changing response to a stressful environment rather than an ability to remain rigid and unchanged by environmental obstacles or a lack of vulnerability.

Neuroplasticity is the brain’s ability to change and adapt through one’s life through the modification of its connections In response to external factors. It allows the brain to form new neural connections and strengthen existing ones in response to learning new skills.

Neuroplactisty is influenced by various factors such as genetics, environmental factors, emotions and learning experiences.Thus, when faced with new situations, stressors or challenges, the brain can reorganize its neural networks to adjust its responses to behaviors.

Resilience is developed when neuroplasticity allows the brain to rewire itself by activating neural pathways associated with resilience such as the prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus. These 2 regions of the brain are important for regulating emotions, problem solving and memory formation, which are crucial for resilience because with these strengthened pathways, there can be an improvement of mental well being that comes with navigating change more effectively.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), neurofeedback and mindfulness based practices can stimulate neuroplasticity to promote positive mental health outcomes. Through these approaches, individuals can reshape their thought patterns, retire maladaptive neural circuits and modify behaviors. This can lead to improved emotional regulation, reduced symptoms of mental health disorders and enhanced overall well being.

# Wrap Up

Resilience is the ability to conceptualize your thoughts and understand your feelings so you can withstand adversity without faltering. Through the understanding that your interpretation of an action and not the action itself, causes a specific emotion to arise from you, you can be able to fight back against resilience within real time. Learning to notice which adversities cause you the greatest problems in life and paying attention to what they have in common will help you gain skills to prevent them and other adversities from getting underneath your skin. However, it’s not as if you’re expected to be in a good mood 24/7. Rather, it's the ability to have our emotions and behaviors be more productive to your well being. The ability to help produce productive responses to the facts of a situation will make you take time to think about your current emotions and reaction to struggles in life, which will help you learn how to overcome them and enjoy your life by constantly learning new things about not only yourself, but the world around you.

Resources :

<https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience> <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-resilience/> (come back to this) <https://henricocasa.org/resilience-reconfiguration> (come back) <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/resilience-strategies-pandemic> <https://www.calm.com/blog/how-to-be-resilient> <https://neuro.georgetown.edu/about-neuroscience/>

<https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/pathol//about_us/resources/glossary_of_medical_terms.html> <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/697956> (neuroscience) <https://saliencehealth.com/news/the-power-of-self-care/>

[https://blog.amputee-coalition.org/education/neuroplasticity-the-brains-ability-to-change-and-ada](https://blog.amputee-coalition.org/education/neuroplasticity-the-brains-ability-to-change-and-adapt-to-promote-positive-changes-in-mental-health/) [pt-to-promote-positive-changes-in-mental-health/](https://blog.amputee-coalition.org/education/neuroplasticity-the-brains-ability-to-change-and-adapt-to-promote-positive-changes-in-mental-health/) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/brain-derived-neurotrophic-factor> <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/22187-cortisol> <https://www.thepositivepsychologypeople.com/acceptance-as-a-foundation-for-resilience/> <https://www.lissyabrahams.com/blog/relationships-increase-resilience> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6464102/> <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/cognitive-behaviour-therapy> [#](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/cognitive-behaviour-therapy)

<https://www.verywellmind.com/overgeneralization-3024614> <https://helpfulprofessor.com/adversity-examples/> <https://helpfulprofessor.com/core-beliefs-examples/> <https://cogbtherapy.com/cbt-blog/cognitive-distortions-overgeneralizing> The Resilience Factor (Reivich & Shatté,2002)

**Social Determinants of Health**

## What are Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are non-medical factors that play a role in the outcome of an individual’s health. The conditions in which the environments one was born, work, live, and worship affect a wide range of health risks. The social determinants of health are made up of 5 domains.

* Economic Stability
  + Economic stability is being sufficient enough in your income in order to have your basic needs met
* Education Access and Quality
* Health Care Access and Quality
* Neighborhood and Built
* Social and Community Context

# Resources

* <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>
* <https://www.cdc.gov/public-health-gateway/php/about/social-determinants-of-health.html>