

Building Resilience

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Topic Overview



What is resilience?

Resilience is an "inner strength" that helps you bounce back after stressful situations. When you are resilient, you may recover more quickly from setbacks or difficult changes, including illness.

Developing resilience begins with simple actions or thoughts that you practice, such as planning for what you'll do next and

learning to accept change.

Being resilient doesn't mean that you find it easy to deal with difficult or stressful situations or that you won't feel angry, sad, or worried during tough times. But it does mean that you won't feel so overwhelmed. You'll be less likely to give up and more likely to cope with stressful situations in healthy ways.

Why is resilience important?

Part of resilience is how you think. Your mind can have a positive or negative effect on your body. This is called the mind-body connection.

For example, negative emotions, such as worry and stress, can cause tense muscles and pain, headaches, and stomach problems. But having a positive outlook on life might help you better handle pain or stress than someone who is less hopeful.

How can you build resilience?

People who are resilient often work to have a positive outlook on life. It may take gradual, small changes in your outlook on life and careful self-evaluation. You may be able to begin this shift on your own. A counselor or therapist can also help you.

Here are some tips to get started:

Change how you think

- Accept that things change.
 - Look at change as a challenge rather than a threat.
 - Examine how and why you feel the way you do when things change.
 - Expect things to work out. You can't change what happens, but you can change how you feel about it.
- See the big picture.
 - Find the positive in stressful situations and learn from the situation.
 - Look for things to learn. Difficult or emotional situations can teach you about yourself. Look to the future, and ask yourself how the stressful event might help you.
 - See the funny side of bad situations.

Change how you act

- Seek out interactions with people who make you feel better.
 - Build relationships that are solid and loving with your family and others. Help them, and don't be afraid to let them help you.
 - Develop a support network.
 - Believe in yourself and the things you can do.
 - Solve problems. Look at all aspects of a problem, and brainstorm solutions. Ask friends for suggestions.
 - Do things to gain self confidence and build self-esteem. For example, list the things you've achieved in your life or those that make you proud.
 - Take good care of yourself.
 - Do things that you enjoy. See a movie. Have a good meal. Laugh with your friends. Know what's important to you.
 - Relax your mind and body (See Stress Management: Relaxing Your Mind and Body in appendix) through techniques such as deep breathing and guided imagery.
 - Talk about how you are feeling, and manage your emotions.
 - Be thankful for the good you see around yourself.
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Related Information

- Mind-Body Wellness
 - Dealing With Negative Thoughts
 - Helping Your Child Build Inner Strength
 - Practicing Gratitude
 - Healing Through Humor
 - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
 - Tapping the Power of Optimism
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Credits for Building Resilience

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Appendix

Introduction

Take a deep breath. Hold it for a moment, and then exhale. Feel more relaxed? Breathing exercises are one way to relax. Here you will learn about different ways to relax your mind and body. Being relaxed can help ease stress. It can also relieve anxiety, depression, and sleep problems.

- To relax means to calm the mind, the body, or both.
 - Relaxing can quiet your mind and make you feel peaceful and calm. Your body also reacts when you relax. For example, your muscles may be less tense and more flexible.
 - There are different ways to relax. You may find one or more ways help to calm you down and feel at peace.
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How can you relax your mind and body?

There are lots of ways to relax. Some ways are designed to relax your mind and some to relax your body. But because of the way the mind and body are connected, many relaxation methods work on both the mind and the body.

You may want to try one or more of the following relaxation tips to see what works best for you.

Relaxing the mind

- Take slow, deep breaths. Or try other breathing exercises for relaxation.
 - Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation
- Soak in a warm bath.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Practice mindful meditation. The goal of mindful meditation is to focus your attention on things that are happening right now in the present moment. For example, listen to your body. Is your breathing fast, slow, deep, or shallow? Do you hear noises, such as traffic, or do you hear only silence? The idea is just to note what is happening without trying to change it.
 - Stress Management: Doing Meditation
- Write. Some people feel more relaxed after they write about their feelings. One way is to keep a journal.
- Use guided imagery. With guided imagery, you imagine yourself in a certain setting that helps you feel calm and relaxed. You can use audiotapes, scripts, or a teacher to guide you through the process.
 - Stress Management: Doing Guided Imagery to Relax

Relaxing the body

- Do yoga. You can get books and videos to do at home or take a yoga class.

- Stress Management: Practicing Yoga to Relax
 - Try progressive muscle relaxation. This process involves tensing and relaxing each muscle group. Progressive muscle relaxation can reduce anxiety and muscle tension. If you have trouble falling asleep, this method may also help with your sleep problems. When you relax your muscles, your body gets the signal that it is okay to fall asleep.
 - Stress Management: Doing Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Take a walk or do some other activity. Making time to do things you enjoy can also help you relax.
 - Get a massage or have someone give you a back rub.
 - Have a warm drink that doesn't have alcohol or caffeine in it, such as herbal tea or warm milk.
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References

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