



Resilience & the Brain



RESILIENCE IS THE ABILITY TO BOUNCE BACK AFTER ADVERSITY.

Resilience, mental health, physical health and brain health all interact and affect how long we live.

Hardship in our lives can be very helpful, believe it or not. Hardship can make us more resilient by creating **Post Traumatic Growth**. It can create:

- Improved relationships
- New possibilities
- Greater appreciation
- Greater sense of personal growth
- Spiritual development



How is resilience related to the brain?

- Your brain will change with stress. This change will be negative change UNLESS you are resilient. If you ARE resilient, there will be even MORE change, BUT it will be GOOD change and help your brain.
- Resilience helps you to quiet the overly emotional part of your brain to boost the thinking part of your brain during stress. This boost to the prefrontal cortex area of your brain allows you to think of the best solution to get out of the stressful situation.

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK BUT ARE OPTIMISTIC LIVE LONGER THAN PEOPLE WHO ARE REALISTIC.

People who live to be very old:

- Handle stress better than the average person
- React less negatively, with less hostility
- Accept change as a part of life, even if it seems negative at first.

Stress is helpful or harmful...

depending on what we believe it is!

If we believe stress is **helpful**, then it is and it actually helps us to live longer. BUT...

If we believe stress is **harmful**...then it is!

Stress will shorten our lives.



How Do We Become Resilient?

There are many doors to resilience.



Building Resilience in Children

- Help them build social connections.
- Teach them that asking for help is okay.
- Teach them to face their fears with support.
- Exercise strengthens and calms the brain.
- **Even the support of one caring adult helps!**
- **Build executive functions** (this strengthens the front part of the brain)
 - Set routines
 - Build problem-solving skills
 - "What's worked before?"
 - List all ideas, even silly ones
 - Break down steps to the problem
 - List pros and cons

More Ways to Build Resilience in Children

- Teach them to do deep breathing.
- Role models help, even superheroes.
- Let them talk.
- Don't rush in too fast to fix things for them.
- Give them some independence; let them disagree.
 - They may offer other solutions. Let them make some decisions.
- Build feelings of competence: **"You can do this!" "You are good at this!"**
- Nurture optimism: **"What's good about this situation?"**
- Teach to reframe: **"What's another way to look at this?" "Could there be anything good about this?"**
- Meet them where they are. They may need time to be sad or angry before moving on.
- Let them know they are loved unconditionally. **"I love you always, even though I'm not so happy with your behavior right now."**
- Model resilience; model healthy relationships. Promote faith, optimism and strength during hard times.



- Play
 - Creative play
 - Board games
 - Memory games

A RESILIENCE TIP FOR ALL AGES

Meditation

- Proven to be helpful for many conditions, including depression, anxiety and ADHD.
- Improves the brain by quieting brain chatter and improving memory.



Ways to Build Resilience in Teens

The same things that work for children are good for teens, but here are a few more.

- Having a safe place, like a bedroom. Having some alone time.
- A way to express themselves - music, art, writing.
- Help them to get good at something; develop a passion.
- Get professional help to reframe earlier trauma.
- Become aware of stressors and how to deal with them.

CONTINUE TO MODEL RESILIENCE, EVEN IF YOU THINK THEY ARE NOT WATCHING!



More Ways to Build Resilience in Teens



- Relaxation and self-care
- Set reasonable goals
- Take breaks
- Consistent routine
- Accept change
- Volunteer or get a job, try new things
- Build self-reliance and initiative
- Humor and optimism in difficulty
- Build morality: **"Do the right thing."**



Ways to Build Resilience in Adults

The same things that work for children and teens can work for adults, but here are a few more.

- Music, singing, dancing - they promote relaxation, recovery and brain health
- Eat healthy food: whole foods that are plant-based
- Faith has many components that build the brain and resilience
 - Prayer
 - Meditation
 - Giving and receiving
 - Sabbath (taking a break from regular life)
 - Concepts/life perspectives: **"Everything happens for a reason."**
- Exercise!
- Sleep
- Positive self-talk
- Manage stress



For more information on Brain Health
and Supporting a Healthy Brain, follow the link below:
<https://www.tndisability.org/brain-health>

References:

- Willcox, B.J., Willcox, D.C. & Suzuki, M. (2002). The Okinawa Program: How the world's longest-lived people achieve everlasting health - and how you can too. Harmony/Rodale.
- Tedeschi, R. G. & Calhoun, L G. (1996). The posttraumatic growth inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. Journal of Traumatic Stress. 9, 455-471.

