

# Building One's Resilience and Capacity to Flourish

“Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they're supposed to help you discover who you are.” – Bernice J. Reagan

It is not uncommon for individuals to feel stressed, emotionally tired, and overwhelmed by the increasing life challenges. In general, most people can draw upon a level of energy required to adapt in positive ways during life-changing and stressful situations. This ability to adapt well despite adversity is referred to as one's capacity to be resilient.

Resilience is a self-righting ability to bounce back and successfully adapt when faced with stressful or challenging situations. Resilient individuals draw upon certain self-beliefs, external supports, and character strengths that prepare them to navigate life challenges in proactive ways. They not only “bounce back” from difficult experiences, they often reflect an increased ability to embrace future challenges and change as a regular part of their ongoing growth journey.

It is essential to understand that the capacity to be resilient is an uneven process – a person might be resilient in one situation and yet, need a higher level of support in a different situation. Resilience is not invulnerability to stress or the trait of a “perfect person.” Instead, resilience reflects a growth mindset with a willingness and courage to take the required smart risks to grow one's potential in purposeful ways. In doing so, one can increase their capacity to be resilient and experience profound personal growth.

Being resilient is not just a unique quality that certain people possess. Everyone can be resilient and grow their potential to thrive. Building one's resilience takes time and is an intentional process. Some suggested strategies to build your capacity to be resilient and experience positive well-being are as follow:

**Cultivate a strengths-based perspective.** It is unrealistic to think that we can avoid the difficult emotions or feelings of stress from living in a fast-changing and unpredictable world. But, being mindful and acknowledging one's inner experience is the starting point for self-care. The attention that is focused on worrying, fretting, anger, revenge, and sadness will rob you of the need to find that safe place and ability to comfort yourself in difficult times. Instead, focus your attention on possibilities, passions, gratitude, compassion, and growth.

**Nurture your sense of empowerment.** Developing your willingness to take action in difficult and stressful situations is enhanced when you have confidence in your own capabilities, knowledge of your strengths, and the belief that you can use challenges to learn, grow, and develop. One's confidence and sense of empowerment grow when new challenges are creatively engaged and resolved with strengths-focused strategies.

**Reframe your stressful experiences.** Although we cannot change our past

experiences, we can learn to change how we understand and respond to them. Stressful events can be managed in a more productive way when we alter how an event is perceived and how it can be controlled to lead to a new awareness and ability to thrive. In many ways, it is a scaffolding process of transformation.

**Know who you need in your inner circle.** We need to build strong connections with others and reach out to them when we need help. It's tough to evaluate ourselves, so we need to have those individuals in our lives who are willing to provide honest information on ourselves and our efforts. When you have the right relationships, you can go well beyond the limits of your energy and resolve issues that may seem impossible for one person to handle. Those who are resilient do so, in part, because they are willing to listen to others, learn from them, and take advice.

**Be clear about your priorities.** Most crises are filled with confusion and ambiguity. You will be most effective if you can quickly decide what is most important and tune out distractions. Clarity allows you to conserve your energy and achieve the best outcomes.

**Be proactive and creative.** When you encounter an unexpected challenge, you need to figure out how you will address it. If you can stretch your brain to come up with a range of options that include new, unusual, or unexpected strategies, you have a better chance of a positive outcome. If the problem is too big, break it down into manageable pieces. As a bonus, this strategy helps you see the humor even in dark times.

**Step out of your comfort zone.** Those who are resilient do so not because they are "natural thrivers" but because they are constantly finding new ways to improve, develop, and grow. They do not settle for the status quo; they find out what they need to know and what they need to do to and work hard to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to get them where they want to go.

**Follow your moral compass.** It is our guiding principles and spiritual beliefs that helps us to navigate and thrive during stressful and challenging times. There are times when the answer or required response is not always clear. But a step of faith based upon one's desire to value the potential in themselves and others will always bear fruit.

**Prioritize your well-being.** Self-care is an important part of staying physically, spiritually and mentally healthy. For many people learning to take care of yourself is a process that can be challenging. For whatever reason, we are often taught that it is a virtue to put the needs of or work, families, and other people ahead of our own needs. But it's okay to focus on yourself. In fact, it's the only way that you're going to have the energy and strength to look after other people. Bettering yourself through self-care will make you healthier, happier and wiser.

**Create meaning in your personal and professional role.** Critical to one's capacity to be resilient and experience positive well-being is finding meaning and value in how one perceives themselves and how they interact with others. Knowing one's sense of purpose creates a foundational belief that what one

does is important to the well-being of others they are helping. Ralph Waldo Emerson left us a quote worthy of consideration: “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

### **A Formula for Being Resilient - Unknown:**

If you change your thoughts ...  
you will change your expectations.

If you change your beliefs ...  
You will change your expectations.

If you change your expectations ...  
you will change your attitude.

If you change your attitude ...  
you will change your behaviour.

If you change your behaviour ...  
you will change your performance.

If you change your performance ...  
you will change your life.

### **References**

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**Author: Dr. Wayne Hammond**  
**Flourishing Life**  
**Founding Partner and CSO**  
[wayne@flourishinglife.com](mailto:wayne@flourishinglife.com)

Over the past 25 years, Dr. Wayne Hammond has worked extensively to improve the lives and coping mechanisms of complex youth and their families and is considered a leading expert on the concepts of resilience, strengths-based practice, and positive psychology. His research and understanding of humanity's need to be connected, valued, and empowered led him to create Flourishing Life.

He has published several scientific articles while developing an innovative framework for evaluating and assessing resilience and potential for human flourishing. He has also been an active lecturer with regard to understanding the role of human flourishing and actively holds an adjunct status with Ambrose University and the School of Medicine at the University of Calgary in Canada.



