

# Emotional Resilience:

*“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” – Confucius*

By Liggy Webb

**Y**ou have most likely heard the expression “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” and you may well have experienced that in your own life. Clearly, some people have the ability to spring back from difficulties and trauma more successfully than others. Learning to be emotionally resilient can certainly be a very useful life skill, especially as it is highly likely that we will all experience adversity from time to time in our lives.

The American Psychological Association reports that “emotional resilience” is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. **Resilience is “bouncing back” from difficult experiences.** Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary, and that people commonly demonstrate resilience. One example is the response of many Americans to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and people’s efforts to rebuild their lives.

**Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn’t experience difficulty or stress.**

Emotional pain and sadness are common in individuals who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives. In fact, the road to resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional distress. Emotional resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that emotional resilience involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.

Good relationships with close family members, friends or others is important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens emotional resilience.

Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organisations or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.

You can’t change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with the situation.

Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.



Acting on adverse situations as much as you can and taking decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away, is good.

People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, a greater sense of personal strength even while feeling vulnerable, an increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and a heightened appreciation for life.

Staying positive and developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience. Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion. You also need to pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself will help to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience and strength.

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Optimism is your window to opportunity and can be learned and nurtured over a period of time. An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualising what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear. It is also very useful to develop some realistic goals for yourself. Doing something regularly, even if it seems like a small accomplishment, will help you to move positively towards your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, “*What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?*”

If we believe that we have the capacity to be able to deal with even the most extreme situation we can not only develop our own internal resources and confidence; we can also be an inspiration and provide hope for others.

#### Emotional Resilience - Useful Tips

- Analyse your reactions to everything
- Embrace challenges and change
- Take Action – No matter how small
- Be open to learning about yourself
- Believe in positive outcomes
- Maintain Perspective
- Look After Yourself
- Be positive and optimistic
- Set goals and objectives
- Be determined and tenacious

Life is what YOU make it!



The above article is an extract from *The Happy Handbook - A Compendium of Modern Life Skills*

by Liggy Webb which is out now.

Liggy Webb is widely respected as a leading expert in the field of *Modern Life Skills and Workplace Wellness*.

As a presenter, consultant and author she is passionate about her work and improving the quality of people’s lives. She is the founding director of The Learning Architect a consortium of niche industry experts. Liggy has developed a range of techniques to support individuals and organizations to cope more effectively with modern living and the demands and challenges of life in the twenty tens and beyond.

As a consultant with the United Nations she travels expensively and has recently returned from Afghanistan which she describes as biggest life education to date!

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