

Resilience



Have you ever met someone who seems to weather the ups and downs that life puts in their way with more than a little equanimity? Such individuals appear to be able to pull themselves up and move onward without becoming undone by whatever has happened to them. These people possess a trait called resilience. Resilience is defined as the ability to successfully adapt to life tasks in the face of social disadvantage or highly adverse conditions. Our lives are peppered with these negative conditions on many occasions. They may include the loss of a job, financial worries, death in the family, loss of relationships, loss of health. As human beings none of us is immune to these vagaries of life but some of us bounce back more easily. Why is that?

People often surmise it is simply one's disposition to be resilient. They were born that way. However, the reality is that, although resilience may be a result of one's family background, heredity, or environment, in the absence of a healthy upbringing, resilience can be learned. Over time one can hone the ability to cope with or navigate around or through crises in one's life. People who are resilient often have a "can do" attitude, are generally optimistic about life and possess a positive outlook on life. Of course, these characteristics just don't happen. To be a resilient person one must practice having a positive attitude and be able to balance negative emotions with that positive attitude.

In other words, resilience is a process, and can be learned. As life pitches some foul balls in one's direction, resilient people interact well with their environments and the strategies they have practiced to either promote well-being or protect themselves from becoming overwhelmed. The resilient person may become upset about the negative occurrence but then he or she decides what they need to do to cope with it. They respond to the situation rather than reacting to it. Over time the resilient person becomes more attuned to their own fears and worries and continues to practice the strategies that have worked best for them in the past. Being able to respond in a healthy and appropriate manner is its own reward. That reward is resilience.