

Resilience

BOUNCING BACK BETTER

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

-Confucius

If you jumped on a mattress which had no stuffing, it would be a hard fall - you would not bounce.

If you were grass, you would bend with the winds no matter how fierce, and if you were a twiggy tree, you would stand firm and risk breaking in the winds.

If you had a large jug of water, you could draw from it for a time, but unless you replenished the jug, the water supply would, at some point, run dry.

Resilience is having the ability to come back to neutral as soon as possible after setbacks. It's having something in reserve to act as resistance to stress. It's also having a mindset that whatever happens, you can and will deal with it. There may be discomfort, grief, loss, changes which were not in the plan - and you can recover and get on with life.

Life throws us curve balls and we don't often get warnings of their imminence. That's life. We can resist, fight and complain, and risk being the twiggy tree, breaking under the strain, or we can shore up our reserves, knowing that life is unpredictable. We can trust our flexibility and our strength to find our way through, come out the other side and move on.

The basis of resilience is emotional and psychological wellbeing, made up of:

Creating and maintaining balance

Managing our state

Flexibility

Creating and maintaining balance

Balancing our nervous system

Balancing our nervous system on a regular basis can be compared to taking a car, boat or plane for regular maintenance. The human body needs maintenance more

often than a vehicle - and the good news is it's free and only takes a few minutes a day. Making a regular habit of *Balanced Breathing 117* brings us back onto an even keel in the moment and also reinforces the neurology of being calm, which is a large part of stress-proofing.

Social/family interaction

Most of us will be aware of the human need for interaction and companionship. We benefit from relating to, having fun with, and sharing time and energy with other people, from those close to us, to those with whom we come into contact casually. Stop and say a kind word to the checkout person at the supermarket!

Positive touch also adds to our wellbeing and hugs are a top-notch way to give and receive this touch. The caring touch of another person - a squeeze on the shoulder or hand, the comfort of sitting close to someone we care about and who cares for us, are ways to make contact. The giving and receiving of touch contributes to our resilience; most cultures include touch in greetings (such as handshakes). Freely inviting or offering touch appropriate to your culture or sub-culture is a basic human connection. The physical and emotional benefits of stroking or cuddling pets are also well documented.

Make space and time to connect and reconnect with people who are important to you, and with people in general, balancing time with others and time to be alone - to meditate, to create and to ponder.

Pacing time and energy

Be aware of your energy levels and work and play to suit them. Taking time out *before* getting exhausted can make the difference between reaching the end of the day feeling satisfied or feeling worn out and fed up. Chunk work down to a manageable pace, take pauses *before* you need them. Even in an employed situation, where work time is mostly (or totally) structured for you, simply lifting your head and taking three long, slow, breaths can be enough to refresh your mind and body.

Play and entertainment may need pacing too. If we play too hard or too long, not leaving enough time or energy for friends, family or work, is this what we really want? If the device or the TV takes many hours of our attention and we neglect what we really value, it may be time to take stock and make a shift.

It's also important to recognise what drains our energy

unnecessarily, and take whatever steps we can to minimise or remove those factors from our lives. Boost your resilience by implementing what you learn in our chapter on *Energy Conservation* 399.

Restorative sleep

If you've ever been sleep-deprived, you'll know the negative effects of tiredness on mood, thinking ability and how we cope with the ups and downs of day-to-day living. Adequate sleep is essential for resilience; if sleeping well hasn't been typical for you, we highly recommend adopting ideas and strategies from our chapter on *Sleep* 392.

Refuelling our reserves

We need refuelling on all levels - emotional, psychological and spiritual, as well as physical.

Along with a nutritious diet, regular exercise and adequate (filtered) water, we need the stimulation of something different to balance the familiar - we need variety for our senses. One way to do this is to give yourself the gift of a holiday. Are you thinking of some tropical island right now? Yes, that's one way and maybe that's a choice for you, and there are other more immediate ways.

Consider - make space in your diary for a day off. Determine whether you need this once a month, every three months or whatever interval feels right. Take yourself out. Leave the phone at home; if you need to, let people know you are unavailable that day. Leave home with a plan or without one. Go to town and browse the shops, visit art galleries or museums, head for a beach or a bush walk, take lunch or find it somewhere - you are a free agent for the day and can do exactly as you please, gaining fresh sights, sounds and sensations.

Even more often, take a mini time out with *Bliss On Demand* 226, *Meditation* 160, or *Self-Hypnosis* 197 from our *Skills* section. These can be achieved in a matter of minutes in a day.

Discover your favourite time out - maybe more than one - and treat yourself to different sized holidays to meet your needs and wants as often as you like.

Managing our state

Maintaining a resourceful state most of the time is optimal for resilience. Nobody can be in a positive mood all day every day, however feeling good most of the time is a worthwhile target. It's a lot about deciding how we want to feel along with having the knowledge of how to change our state when we

want to do so. Choose from the *Skills* section - for instance you might use the *Eye-Finger Pattern 145* or *Clearing Pattern 135* to clear any unhelpful feelings and use *State Anchoring 211* to trigger your desired states on demand.

Engage an attitude of gratitude

It's a funny thing about life, once you begin to take note of the things you are grateful for, you begin to lose sight of the things that you lack.

~Germany Kent

Gratitude is an emotion, an attitude and a mindset; it has the potential to change habitual thought patterns which may not be helpful or supportive. One extensive study (Emmons and McCullough 2003) showed that in a 21 day period, taking just two minutes each morning to express three things they were grateful for resulted in significant mood change for a group of people, shifting from pessimistic to more optimistic.

In *Feeling 37*, Kate turned her life around after major setbacks, primarily by firmly establishing a habit of acknowledging gratitude.

Sometimes, when times are really tough, it becomes necessary to pare right back to basics and be grateful for having breath, for food to eat, for shoes to put on, or for being able to see. There is always something for which we can be grateful, no matter how basic or simple.

Establishing the gratitude habit primes the brain to be on the lookout for positives and lessens the attention paid to what is not perfect. It alters how we view the world. We begin to notice more to appreciate, and fewer obstacles - or the obstacles can become mere pebbles on our path.

To begin, you could follow the example from the research project mentioned above, and every morning either write down or fully acknowledge three things for which you are grateful, in that moment. Or you could follow Oprah Winfrey's example of writing, at the end of each day, five things for which you are grateful, from the day. She has publicly stated that this habit, more than any other single action, changed her life for the positive.

Choose a way to acknowledge gratitude that suits you, try it for 21 days and see what happens. Is your wellbeing, your resilience, worth a few minutes in your day?

The single greatest thing you can do to change your life today would be to start being grateful for what you have right now.

- Oprah Winfrey

Be in the now

In *Mindfulness The EHP Way* 170 we learn the art of being present, being in the now. The present moment is where we find peace and joy. Looking back on what went wrong sets us up for depressive thoughts. Worrying about the future invites anxious thoughts. We cannot stay in the present all of the time, nor should we. We need to plan, anticipate, keep appointments - and it can be very pleasant recalling past events which have been fun or fulfilling. If we spend some time being fully present, five times a day or more - the more the better - it's like putting emotional resilience money in the bank.

Basically, being now is bringing your full attention to your senses right where you are; noticing what you see - the colours, shadings, shapes and textures - noticing any sounds, foreground or background, and any other sensory experience - feelings from your skin out and from your skin in. Bring your full focus to YOU and your senses and enjoy the time to simply *be*. Just a minute or two of clock time can be a long time in mind time - enjoy and refresh!

Go natural

For the ultimate in *being now*, head out into the natural world whenever you can. There is a growing body of evidence confirming that spending time in nature has profound benefits for our wellbeing and resilience. Soak up the sights and sounds of nature in all her glory; notice flowers, raindrops and clouds; listen to a waterfall, birds singing, wind in the trees. Smell grass underfoot or leaf litter in the forest; boost your tactile senses by touching the bark of different trees and noticing the feel of sun or rain on your skin. If you don't have your own garden, hunt out somewhere you can taste fruit fresh from the tree or vine, infused with sunshine. Nurture yourself with nature.

Flexibility

Confidence to navigate challenges

Having the confidence that we can deal with whatever life presents us with is a key element to having resilience. We will all have faced challenges and found our way through to the other side; that we are still here is our living proof - this is

one piece of evidence that we can deal with life's tricky bits. We will all have heard and read stories of people who have overcome incredible odds to live happy and fulfilling lives. If one person can do that, another person can. We are more alike than we are different, to loosely quote Maya Angelou, and we can all find our way when we seem lost.

If your head knows it and your heart or your gut is not so sure, you might refer to the chapters on *Confidence 351* and *Beliefs 317*. One of our headline messages is this: the brain is an amazing instrument and we can use our mind to train or retrain our brain. Our brain is plastic, malleable and can change - fast - to do what we want it to do, using our skills.

Reframing

Reframing is looking at things in a different way. Do you see the glass half full or half empty - or refillable? Having flexibility in viewpoints is important in order to be resilient. Different perspectives offer more choices, allow us to see another person's view, and can leave the way open for humour. The sooner we can laugh at a situation, the sooner we move on from discomfort or hurt. *Perceptual Positions 68* reminds us there are different ways to see things and *Reframing 193* offers us ideas on how to change the emotional effect by changing how we see or describe a situation. For instance muddy footprints on the floor can remind us the family we love is right here with us.

Giving up on perfectionism

We know you're out there - people who find it hard to settle for less than perfect, who strive above and beyond and then some. It comes as a challenge, doesn't it, to let it go, to walk away, to see someone else do something which falls short - in your estimation! Does this add stress to one's life? If taken to extremes, yes it does.

If this is you, you might like to try an exercise in flexibility. Leave something imperfectly done. Walk away and find a distraction. Go into third perceptual position and notice how interesting it can be. Smile to yourself at the diversity of human beings, along with all our similarities, our individual ways of doing things. Try on, just for fun, a 'that'll do' attitude with something that really doesn't matter. Let it go. Look at the clouds or wonder how the newly emerged butterfly knows to fly directly to her source of food. A relaxed attitude is an element of being resilient.