



RESILIENCE

What is resilience?

Resilience is described as bouncing back, moving on from failure, finding life again after something bad has happened.

Most of us find failing difficult. We tend to be hard on ourselves when we make mistakes. It is not failing that defines us, however, it is whether we get up and carry on that matters. It can be tempting to sit and feel sorry for ourselves or to sink into despair. We should instead try to see failure as feedback or a door closed, rather than the end of the road. Remember, we rarely achieve our goals without some setbacks.

How to develop more resilience

Try to notice your own negative self-talk

Often, particularly when we have received a lot of criticism as a child, we develop a negative voice which adds to our misery when life is not going as we would like. Perhaps you tell yourself: "I always do that" or "nothing good ever happens to me." Try to notice when you are giving yourself a hard time and ask yourself: "Is there another way of looking at this?" "What would I say to a friend in these circumstances?" or, "What can I learn through this?"

Learn to forgive

Often the hardest person to forgive is yourself. You cannot go back and change the past, you can only learn from it. Beating yourself up over past mistakes can prevent you from moving on. Christians believe that God

can always forgive and this can help us to be gentle with ourselves. You may need to talk to a Pastor, friend or counsellor if you struggle to forgive yourself for past events.

It may be that other people have treated you very badly and hurt you. If we allow ourselves to hold onto bitterness, however, it can damage us and hinder our healing and recovery. Again, you may need outside help to find a way through to a place where you can let these hurts go.

Resist comparing yourself.

It is very rarely helpful to compare ourselves with others. You can always find someone who, on the surface at least, is doing better, looking healthier and generally appearing more successful than you. Social Media is perhaps the worst place for this, as people tend to post the “glossy version” of their life and rarely the low points. Try to avoid focussing on this potentially unreal world and instead, invest your time in friends who are prepared to let you see their weaknesses, as well as their strengths. It is, also, unhelpful to look for people who are making more of a mess of things than you! This can lead to a lack of compassion and negativity that is damaging.

Share things with friends.

A good friend will support you and walk beside you when life gets tough. So nurture your friendships, try to pick people who are positive about you and encourage you. You may need to move on from friends who lead you back into past failures. Try to make use of those around you that can help.

Remember your past successes

All of us have achieved something. Make a list of your successes. This can encourage and inspire you.

Set yourself achievable goals.

Breaking things down is really helpful. If you set the bar too high, then you are setting yourself up for a fall. Whereas, if you set small goals, you can begin to develop a sense of achievement. Want to give up a bad habit? It may help to cut down gradually.

Try to reduce harmful coping strategies

Sometimes we avoid facing our difficulties and may turn to unhelpful ways to cope (for example, alcohol, over-eating, self-harm, social withdrawal). You may need external help to learn better ways of managing difficulties.

Develop good self-care

If you want to chop up a large pile of wood, the first thing to do is to sharpen your axe. If we don't care for ourselves it is like trying to chop wood with a blunt axe. We need to find ways to make ourselves more effective, for example, getting sufficient sleep, eating well, taking regular exercise, remembering medication and learning to relax. These good habits can make us more effective in life.

Live in the present

We can spend so much of our life regretting the past or dreading the future, but the only bit we get to live in is now. Try to savour the moment: perhaps spend a little longer in the shower, noticing how good it feels; go out and spend time enjoying nature, really taking time to look and listen; take time over your food enjoying the taste and textures. Think about what you can do today to make life better. Try not to think ahead, imagining the worst case scenario. Only try to deal with what is likely to happen.

There is more than one way around a problem

If something hasn't worked out, maybe you need to try a different approach. Successful people learn to think elastically. There may be another way around the problem. If you are struggling, talking to someone else can help.

Dare to hope

It can be really empowering to picture in your mind where you would like to be in six months or a year's time. Hold onto that image when the task ahead seems too great.

Finding meaning in life.

If you can find a sense of strength and meaning in your life, it will really help build your resilience.

Verses from the bible:

Finding meaning in life:

The meaning of life, according to the Christian faith, is ultimately found in Jesus Christ.

Jesus himself told a story about resilience. One man built his house on sand, another on rocks. When the storms came, the house on the sand fell down, but the house on the rock stood firm. If you want to withstand life's storms, build your life on God's love and His promises. There can be no firmer foundation.

**“The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”**

Psalm 18:2

Dealing with negative self-talk:

We are given a powerful tool in 2 Corinthians 10:5: **“we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”** Rather than continuing to fuel our self-doubt with negative thoughts, we can make a conscious decision to take those thoughts captive with God's help.

Consciously block and redirect those negative thoughts, turning either to prayer or to focus on a specific verse of Scripture, such as Philippians 4:8: **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”** Over time it will become second nature to redirect your thought patterns to override that negative voice.

Forgiving your past failures:

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1) If you are inclined to replay past sins and failures over and over in your mind, remind yourself to trust in Christ's promises: you are forgiven, you are chosen, you are His.

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:12-13) Forgiveness is God's antidote for bitterness, rage and anger. It's an act of will, not dependent on our feelings, on whether or not we want to forgive, or “feel like” forgiving. To combat bitterness and anger, try to practice the opposite: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Always remember God's kindness to us.

Sharing with friends:

You may well find that others are fighting the same battle. **“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”** (James 5:16)

Living in the present:

Jesus encourages us to live in the present: **“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”** (Matthew 6:34) That might seem easier said than done, but we have a powerful tool available to us: prayer. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul exhorts us **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”.** (Philippians 4:6-7)

Finding another way through:

Don't lose your confidence when things don't go as planned; persevere and keep trusting in the Lord and not in your own strength. **"they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."** (Isaiah 40 v 31)

Take time to pray about what God might have planned for you.

Remember that God has plans for you, and they are good. His plan for you started even before you were born:

**"Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be."** (Psalm 139:16)