

Strategies for Self-Care and Resilience

Resilience has been defined by the American Psychological Association as “the human ability to adapt in the face of tragedy, trauma, adversity, hardship, and ongoing significant life stressors.”

It is essential to take care of yourself. Just as you would tend to an acute physical injury by seeking support, alleviating symptoms of pain, and taking steps to ensure recovery, the same is true for an emotional or psychological challenge or obstacle. And, just as the human body is often ingenious in the way it can mend itself, so too the mind and heart can be incredibly resilient. We just have to help them along.

Building and Engaging Resilience

Below are some tips for taking care of yourself and engaging your resilience. Please feel free to use those ideas that you find most useful and continue to engage your own coping strategies.

■ Physical self-care

- Get enough sleep
- Get regular physical activity
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals
- Reduce alcohol and caffeine consumption
- Release tension in healthy ways
- Take deep breaths
- Balance work, play, and rest
- Limit or eliminate exposure to media

■ Emotional self-care

- Know your vulnerabilities
- Get help early on if you are feeling overwhelmed
- Use relaxation skills that work best for you
- Listen to music that soothes you
- Engage socially to avoid feeling isolated
- Set limits, if necessary, when others are too demanding of your time or energy (Give yourself time to heal and renew.)
- Reestablish a routine, if possible

■ Social self-care

- Be aware of withdrawal and isolation
- Get nurturance/care from loved ones
- Use friends and family and community for support
- See how work can offer support
- Seek out others for social activities
- Recognize that humor can be a useful respite
- Make an effort to have fun

■ Spiritual self-care

- Use religious and/or spiritual resources and communities
- Read inspirational works
- Pray
- Practice gratitude
- Meditate
- Connect with nature
- Find creative ways to express yourself (i.e., drawing, painting, writing, etc.)

■ **Remember to:**

- Recognize signs of stress and look after yourself
- Identify what you can and cannot change
- Keep expectations realistic
- Make deliberate plans to care for yourself
- Accept your limitations
- Allow others to give to you
- Find a reason to smile or laugh every day

Checklist for Resilience: Ask Yourself These Questions

- What are my strengths?
- What has helped me endure previous difficult times?
- What healthy things can I do to soothe myself when I'm faced with uncertainty?
- Is there something I can do to influence what will happen next? If so, what?
- What are my resources to increase my resilience?
- How can I ask for what I need?

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