

Being the CEO of your responses

Beverly Landais suggests ten tips to build personal resilience.

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'Kee calm and build resilience' reads the poster advertising the community events in a village near to where I live in Kent. I see a range of activities that aim to bring together the residents regardless of age or gender. There are exhibitions, demonstrations, fitness classes, fun activities and a social element that encourages people to meet up and get involved.

There are also practical talks on how to deal with home emergencies and major incidents that may require the community to give assistance, based on local knowledge and resources, to the emergency and supporting services. The tagline proudly states 'building community resilience'. Bravo!

Resilience is about building strong community spirit so that people can cope better with and return more quickly to normal after a crisis. It is also about planning and sharing information. Plans can help people deal with difficult situations effectively as well as save time, reduce confusion and speed up recovery.

Reflecting on this display of community spirit, it occurs to me that building personal resilience requires a similar set of approaches. Personal resilience or 'bounce-back' is the ability to cope with and rise to the inevitable challenges, disappointments and setbacks you meet during your life, and come back stronger from them.

Resilience relies on a mixture of skills all of which can be acquired with effort and determination. It necessitates an imaginative and resourceful attitude and the ability to maintain perspective. It also



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requires the willingness to draw on various sources of help, including rational thinking skills, physical wellbeing and mental health, and your relationships with those around you.

Here are my top tips that will have a positive impact on your ability to deal with challenging situations:

- **It is good to talk.** Build a network of like-minded people who will encourage and support you through good times and bad. Being isolated during testing times distorts and magnifies a sense of fear and dread. A strong social and professional network is invaluable and will ground you. Talking it through not only gives you the chance to get ideas from others but might also lead to you realising that you hold the answers to your own questions. Having someone to share ideas and strategies for overcoming obstacles, can really help with the motivation to create and crystallise a plan, and to push on. It is ironic that people sometimes feel that showing they need others is a sign of weakness, yet the opposite is true. It shows wise self-awareness. In my experience, if you are there for others when they need support, they will generally be there for you.
- **Raise your pulse.** We all know that being physically active is good for our bodies. Yet our physical health and mental health are closely linked. According to Mind, the mental health charity, being active can be very beneficial for our ability to deal with stress and promote a sense of wellbeing. All of which is essential for building personal



your mood and bring clarity to your thoughts. There are many mindfulness apps and other resources you can access to help you develop the techniques. You might also want to check out the excellent TED talk by mindfulness expert, Andy Puddicombe which is entitled 'All it takes is 10 mindful minutes'.

- **Drink enough water.** A simple yet effective way to keep your brain and body in tip-top condition. Don't wait until you are thirsty as this is a sure sign that you are already dehydrated. Keep a bottle of tap water by the side of your desk and sip throughout the day.
- **Tame your workload.** Undertaking an audit of all the things you are involved in, then use the technique of 'ditch, do, delegate' to bring it under control. Do this without passing judgment on what resource might or might not be available to support you. This way you will have a clear-eyed view of what is truly important and what is not. Being prepared and thinking ahead will help you deal better with the unexpected and enable you to maintain your equilibrium in the toughest of times.
- **Keep breathing.** Take a few minutes to breathe properly. In through the nose, out through the mouth. Enjoy the feeling of being composed through a focus on the breath. It is free and easy to apply!
- **Be grateful.** Start your day reflecting on three things that make you feel positive and happy. Share the feeling by practising 'random acts of kindness'. Make your first email, text or phone call an occasion to thank someone for their help, pass on a compliment or to notice their effort.
- **You are the CEO of your responses in any situation.** Choose how you react and reflect on the difference a calm and measured approach has on your well-being and ability to cope. We all face setbacks as well as enjoy success throughout life. You can either learn from them and move on or remain bitter and disappointed. It really is your choice.



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resilience.

Find time to exercise: play a sport, walk the dog, dance, run up the stairs, cycle – or my own personal favourite – hula hoop! It doesn't matter what you do, just get moving. The effort will invigorate and energise you.

- **Mind your mindset.** Our beliefs and attitudes shape our reaction to events. Watch out for negative self-talk. Self-talk in a fixed mindset might sound like you are making excuses, blaming others or it is that 3am in the morning voice that says, "you are not good enough – you don't have the talent for this". Learn to spot when this happens. Notice the effect it has on you. Talk back to it with a growth mindset voice, telling yourself feedback is an opportunity to improve, and that you can learn from mistakes. You can foster a growth mindset by seeing the effort you make as the key to success. In the face of setbacks or mistakes, focus on what you are learning and how you might apply this in the future. This will enable you to thrive in the face of a challenge.
- **Develop the habit of reflective practice.** It helps to develop a questioning approach to self-improvement. Try using Rolfe's framework for reflective practice. It is a very simple and memorable model offering a very flexible process to help gain insight, consider options and plan for action. Dr Gary Rolfe uses three simple questions to reflect on a situation: What? (happened), So what? (does it mean) and Now what? (do I need to do). The final question can make the greatest

contribution to learning and personal growth. Try it for yourself and see how it can transform your thinking and approach to problem-solving.

- **Get enough rest.** Sleep is a wonderful restorative and can help you cope with the difficulties life puts in your path. Catnapping is a great way to refresh yourself too. Of course, the stress of dealing with negative events can all too often disturb your sleep. It is sensible to seek professional advice if you find yourself in a cycle of disturbed sleep. The Sleep Council (www.sleepcouncil.org.uk) is an impartial, advisory organisation that raises the awareness of the importance of a good night's sleep to health and wellbeing. It also provides helpful advice and tips on how to improve sleep quality and create the perfect sleep environment.
- **Practice mindful minutes.** Psychologist Abraham Maslow stated that human motivation is based on people seeking fulfilment and change through personal growth. Maslow is quoted as saying 'the ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness'. Mastering the art of stillness is an incredibly powerful way to take control of your response to a difficult situation. With practice, you can learn to effectively press 'pause' before jumping in, and that can be a precious time to promote calm consideration and result in a better reaction. Just a couple of minutes spent in the deliberate practice of living in the moment can quiet the mind, improve