
6 Ways To Build a Resilient Mindset That Can Weather Tough Times

It's one thing to have a positive mindset when there's no turmoil and life is chugging along at the status quo. But when something like a health crisis sweeps the nation, threatening your practice, patients' health, and basic sources of happiness, it's a lot harder to dredge up positive emotions and feelings. And guess what? That's OK.

"We need to give ourselves some grace and compassion when we're not walking around with sunshine beams coming out of our eyes," says [Wes Cain](#), a licensed counselor who focuses on the mental health of athletes, and who has a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling. In fact, it's in those moments that we can learn the most about ourselves. It's how we grow.

Tiffany Grimm is the director of learning and development at Exos and a registered yoga instructor who deems discomfort as essential. "Those moments are the deeper gateways to healing," she says. "Those negative feelings? Invite them in. In fact, it's dangerous not to. "When we avoid negative feelings, they become suppressed, which leads to stagnation and tension in the body."

So the question is, how can you cultivate a resilient mindset to help get you through tough times in a healthy and constructive way, and turn stress into strength on the other side?

Here are some strategies to consider.

1. Reframe what stress means to you.

Perception is a powerful tool, so much so that becoming more resilient to stress could be as simple as believing that stress is a tool for growth rather than a means to tear you down. A [group of studies published](#) in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology showed exactly that.

Researchers found that whether study participants believed stress to be either enhancing or debilitating influenced whether it actually was enhancing or debilitating. They were able to change the participants' responses to stress when they changed their attitude toward it.

You could say that simply viewing stress as a tool for growth is kind of like calling checkmate. Grimm recommends a strategy called BOLD. It stands for breathe deeply, observe, listen to your values, and decide to take action. For more, check out her five-minute talk on [changing your perspective on stress](#).

2. Schedule both social time and alone time.

You can and should make a strong effort to connect with people. Clinical psychologist Lata McGinn says this is your biggest buffer against mental health and mindset issues. That being said, consider how often you're filling your time with other activities.

If you're overscheduling yourself between work, virtual happy hours, and FaceTime with your friends, you might be avoiding the feelings and emotions that you need to work through in order to grow.

Even when you find time alone, do you immediately turn to your phone? Try not to. Meditate or journal instead. "It's really important right now that people take this time to do their inner work," says Cain.

To help, Grimm also suggests starting your day with a morning ritual, using this as transitional time before you start checking items off your to-do list to set your day up to be more meaningful and intentional. "This could look different for everyone, but you could go outside and take three breaths of fresh air. Do your favorite stretch. Think of one thing that you're excited about," she says.

3. Find activities that make you feel optimistic.

While it's OK to worry (remember we're facing our feelings, not avoiding them), the idea is to not feel trapped by worry. McGinn explained that while worry is intended to help you prepare to take action against danger — a helpful skill — this idea can result in feeling like you should worry to protect yourself.

Your brain might say: Keep worrying, this is good for you, think of a plan. "These thoughts are unhelpful and can heighten anxiety over time," she says. Essentially, what's meant to be helpful so easily becomes a tumbleweed of unhelpful worry.

To combat this and find balance, engage in activities you enjoy and that make you feel optimistic. "We must interrupt the pattern," adds Grimm. When you catch yourself worrying, acknowledge it's there, and then choose to focus on something you're grateful for — fun, laughter, a specific activity. Cain focuses a lot on the concept of flow, saying it's beneficial to give energy to the activities where time stops and you're fully immersed. "Find the things that you love and do them as much as you can," he says.

4. Think twice before you keep scrolling.

Here's what we know about social media: It's a great resource of information and entertainment, and it helps you connect with others. But, and this is a big but, it can be a time suck and trigger a lot of anxiety. That's what makes it so tricky; it wavers on that line between what's good for you and what's bad for you.

"Social media can make people feel that others are coping better, are happier, and have more social connections," says McGinn. We know this as fear of missing out, and one way to deal with it is to get strict about your screen time limits. Cain also advises auditing the accounts you're following.

You know the saying that you are what you eat? Well, in a lot of ways, you're also what you consume on social media. "The question is, what are you feeding yourself? Are you feeding yourself negative stuff or positive stuff? That's what's going to impact you," says Cain.

5. Journal about the positive moments in your life.

Let's say you feel really overwhelmed. You start to engage in negative self-talk, telling yourself you're not worthy or talented or skilled. Cain points out that if you can recognize the negative talk happening, you can choose to shift. So simple, right? "It's probably not something you want to be doing," he says.

So do the opposite. Take five or 10 minutes to journal and reflect on all the positive moments in your life. At Exos, we call this creating a mental trophy room that you can go back to whenever you need to feel uplifted or empowered.

6. Practice gratitude and exercise kindness.

If there's one thing that can reverse your negative mindset and all the emotions that might be creating it, it's gratitude. "Go out and do something good for somebody — a stranger, a neighbor. That starts to shift mindset right away," says Grimm. You can also try [writing down what you're grateful](#) for in the moments you feel trapped by negative thoughts.

Robert Emmons is a well-known researcher focused on gratitude's impact on well-being. Through his extensive research he's found that [practicing gratitude can increase optimism](#) and joy, and make you more forgiving. It can even benefit your physical health by strengthening your immune system and improving your sleep, the latter of which can directly impact your mindset, mood, and productivity.

At the end of the day, there are a lot of ways to build a healthy and resilient mindset, but most of them boil down to allowing yourself to feel negative emotions without fixating on them (because you're human and they make you normal), focusing on what you're grateful for, and doing good things for others. Make those priorities in your daily life, and your mindset will come out on top.