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# Resiliency: How To Cultivate and Sustain It

By Angelica Wilson

A resilient person is defined as someone able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions. Over the course of my life, I've heard variations of the following phrases several times: "You're so resilient!" "Woah, I can't believe you just kept going." Truthfully, being resilient is something that came naturally for me — as a means of survival. But processing and truly thinking about my resilient moments has been a whole other journey in itself.

Instead of dragging you through my life's journey. I'd like to offer some tips on cultivating, tapping into, and sustaining a resilient mindset. A mindset that will allow you not only to make it through difficult situations, but to also keep you in a headspace that will keep you feeling supported enough to move forward.

## Cultivate a Sustainable Resilient Mindset

Cultivating sustainable resilience (resilience that doesn't burn you out in two days) requires taking the time to learn about yourself. Here are a couple starting points when it comes to the journey of becoming self-aware.

### **How You React to Frustration**

Have you ever gotten frustrated and yelled at someone who had nothing to do with your frustration? Have you ever called yourself stupid when you've made a mistake? Being able to recognize the ways in which you communicate to yourself and those around you is an important part of self-awareness. A teacher once told me, "communication is where we fall apart," and ever since, I've noticed that boiling points arise out of miscommunication. So begin with yourself. Begin to notice the ways in which you speak to yourself, and make sure you're staying in the moment.

For example, let's say you printed the wrong paperwork. Instead of saying "Ugh, I'm so stupid," try saying, "Okay. This isn't correct. Let's try again." Keep yourself focused on the task at hand.

### **Where Your Breath Lives in Your Body**

When intense moments arise, where does your breath live? Oftentimes, in stressful situations, our breath gets caught in the top of our chest. Almost like we're struggling for air. Try belly breathing. That means instead of your chest only rising and falling, learn how to breathe in the space below your belly button. Yes, dig that deep. Breathing into the floor of the pelvis is one technique that can offer a sense of grounding and centering that can come in handy when difficult moments appear.

## Tap Into Your Resilience

When it's "go time" and you have to burrow yourself into your tasks, a sense of being overwhelmed can likely occur. Here are a couple ways to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed so that you can stay focused:

### **Locate Yourself**

If you notice yourself letting out a sharp sigh when you're stressed out, that's one way to actually pull yourself into the present. When it's time to be resilient, especially for hours on end, staying in the present is incredibly important. Instead of picturing the potential doom ahead, pull yourself to where you are in the moment so you can stay focused. Also, the sigh you let out can be more like a water breath (inhale for a four-count and exhale for a four-count).

### **Plot a Timeline In Real Time**

Prioritization is another key to tapping into resilience. If we go into a difficult situation without the ability to continuously prioritize, then mistakes may be made due to miscommunication. You may tell someone to do the wrong thing first. You might forget to send an important email.

Start by taking on the task that needs the most attention at that moment. Then notice what tasks will take more time than others. Next figure out if you can start a more time-consuming task and complete smaller tasks simultaneously after you've begun the larger one.

Prioritizing also helps to keep you on track to make it to the end of whatever difficulty is ahead. Now, does that mean you'll magically remove all stress from your situation? No. But, will you be able to stay organized and move through your situation efficiently? Yes.

## Sustaining a Resilient Mindset

This is the important part not many discuss. There is such a great need to be able to process the situation that you've just been through. While you may need to be resilient for long periods of time, you won't need to power through a difficult situation during every second of your entire life. Here are some tips on how to begin to process what you've gone through so that you can continue to move forward:

### **Carve Out Personal Time**

Depending on your situation you might take time for a 20-minute-plus meditation, or just 60 seconds of a breathing exercise, as your personal time. Personal time can also mean taking an extra bit of time to yourself in the bathroom. Or use that moment when you get home to pause and reflect on your day. These ways of taking time for yourself, and others like a deep breath or a step-by-step go-through of your previous day while you're waiting in a drive-through line. all count.

### **Make a List of Short Encouraging Phrases**

I'll let you know right now that my list of phrases is stored in the side corner of my brain, so this doesn't have to be tangible by any means. This is more of a reminder to get into the habit of encouraging yourself both within and outside of difficult moments. Being able to tell yourself these

phrases may be the thing that keeps you from a breakdown or builds you back up after one. Here are a few of mine:

- I am so proud of you.
- Wait, you did that? Go you!
- It's okay. Mistakes happen. Now, how do we move forward?
- Remove your tongue from the roof of your mouth! Much better.
- Breathe in. Breathe out.

Now you have a place to start. Create your own outline, learn about yourself and how you respond to your environment, write your own encouraging phrases, and, most important, breathe.