

Building and Maintaining Resilience

As we stand together in this unprecedented moment in time, it is inevitable to feel a certain level of stress and anxiety. Being aware of how we are responding and practicing different ways to care for ourselves will boost our resilience. Below, please find some recommendations to help you manage the uncertainty you may be experiencing in a more positive way to help you stay healthy, calm, and empowered.

1. Control the Controllables

It is easy to fixate on events outside of our control. Instead of focusing on what we cannot do, ask yourself what you can do during these uncertain times to build individual and collective well-being. When you start noting feelings of stress, ask yourself, "What can I control in this situation?" The truth is that we can only control what we think, say, and do, and how we *respond* to events outside of ourselves. Accept what you cannot control and thus stop wasting energy on the unnecessary. Focus your energy and effort into what you can directly control.

2. Practice Self-Care

Take care of yourself by focusing on proper sleep, eating non-processed, nutritious foods, staying hydrated, and keeping your body moving. Practice stress management and relaxation techniques, such as yoga, meditation, guided imagery, deep breathing, and/or prayer. There are many free resources available via apps, books, and online videos that you can utilize to guide you. (*Favorite meditation apps: Insight Timer, Calm, Headspace*).

3. Connect with Others

Stay connected to others by working on building strong, positive relationships with loved ones and friends who can provide you with needed support and acceptance in both good times and bad. During this time of needed social distance, besides staying connected by voice or text, consider a video option like FaceTime, Skype, Microsoft Teams, or Google Hangouts. *Consider setting up virtual coffee or lunch dates with a friend; connect with your team daily for a virtual morning huddle.*

4. Stick with a Routine (with some flexibility)

Try to maintain a routine that reflects your normal daily schedule. Act as if you are going somewhere (like work or school) when you wake up - exercise, shower, get dressed, make your bed, prepare for the day. Staying in your pajamas all day may make you feel less productive, lethargic and allow your mood to spiral. Make a plan for how you are going to organize your day either the night before or early morning. Create a structured, dedicated work environment with some set hours, preferably not on the couch where you usually watch television.

5. Go Outside

Find some time during your day to get outside, daily, preferably combining this with movement or exercise. Being in fresh air and connecting with nature decreases mental stress and boosts our immune system. It allows us to take a pause from work, news, and stress, especially if we park our phones.

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6. Manage Your Energy

Strike a balance with your energy by being mindful of over- or under- working. Stick with a routine, but also allow yourself to move with a little more ease than usual. It is not necessary to pack every minute with activities. Allow yourself and others at home patience, self-compassion, and reflection that so often goes to the wayside in times when we feel frenetic and hurried.

7. Think Effectively

When we face uneasiness or worry, it is easy to allow our thoughts to go wild, thinking the worst will occur. Challenge those catastrophic thoughts by acknowledging your feelings as valid, but then countering them. Talk with others or journal what you are feeling, rather than allowing yourself to ruminate. Remind yourself of transitions and challenges you navigated in the past. When negative or anxious thoughts arise, ask yourself, "How is this serving me?" Find a mantra or phrase that may help pull you back to feeling centered – "I am at peace"; "I am calm." "This will pass". "This is only temporary". Look for positives that you are seeing in yourself or others. Consider starting a gratitude journal – in morning or before bedtime, write down 3 things for which you feel grateful.

8. Stay in the Present

What do you notice about your breath right now? Our breath is an excellent anchor to the present, but sometimes we get stuck in the past or worry about the future. Practice deep breathing using your diaphragm – exhaling down through your belly and inhaling all the way up through your chest. Find a count that is even from inhale to exhale. This helps keep your breath even and smooth and since counting is emotionally neutral, it allows you to focus on the numbers rather than the stressor, becoming a distraction technique to your negative, racing thoughts. (Ex: inhale 1,2,3,4,5; exhale 1,2,3,4,5) Repeat for at least two minutes multiple times per day.

9. Focus on Priorities and Purpose

The most resilient people see change as an opportunity to align priorities and purpose. Most of the time we do not seem to have any discretionary time. Use any downtime you may now have wisely and really allow yourself a moment for reflection. How do you want to spend your time? What's really important to you? Use the acronym **W-I-N** to help: W-What's I-Important N-Now? Use this strategy to refocus on what you truly want. Have a list of objectives for the day to focus on so that you can have a sense of accomplishment or purpose at the end of the day.

10. Create Some Levity

Explore funny movies, documentaries, podcasts, articles, books, and magazines. Use some downtime to explore a hobby that you've never allowed yourself time to pursue, order some art supplies, print out some pages to color, play some board games with family, and plan for the future.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive or overwhelming, but ideas to keep you in the mindset of resilience. Do one or all! If you have any additional ideas or resources that you would like to share, please feel free to email me and I will pass them on. We will all get through this together!

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