

Resilience: Navigating Acceptance and Change

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Resilience has been defined as the capacity to face, overcome, be strengthened by, and even be transformed by experiences of adversity. Our capacity to be resilient is based upon both internal factors (i.e., personal history, personality) and situational factors. As a result, we may be resilient in one situation but struggle in another. It is important to note that being resilient also means that we will experience emotions as we face challenges in our life.

Research indicates there are many factors that enable us to be resilient. Social support, optimism, self-confidence, regular exercise, forgiveness, and gratitude for the blessings in our life all contribute to being resilient. However, the notion of acceptance and change can be particularly difficult for us.

Acceptance is a vital skill in the development of resilience and refers to our willingness and capacity to accept life exactly as it is rather than attempting to fight, control, or manipulate ourselves or others. Although it is very easy for us to intellectually recognize we are not perfect, it is emotionally difficult for us to accept that we can hurt people, we can feel rage, jealousy, or lust, we can engage in unhealthy behaviours, or we are not physically attractive in some way. Moreover, it is emotionally difficult for us to accept being powerless to change some aspect of ourselves, others, and the world. Accepting and embracing our brokenness or imperfections with gentleness, compassion, and courage allows us to reduce our sense of shame. As well, focusing on what we can control and letting go of what we cannot leads to a sense of efficacy and avoidance of frustration, hopelessness, and resignation.

The centrality of change in our life can also be very difficult. Change inevitability requires us to mourn our loved ones who have passed. Change requires us to accept that our bodies are transforming and becoming increasingly frail. Change requires us to let go of our comfort zone and embrace new technologies, new perspectives and new approaches. Change requires us to embrace the four seasons in our life and the ebb and flow of our emotions. Change requires us to accept that there is no such thing as being happy on a constant basis.

Strategies to enable us to integrate acceptance and change into our life can include:

- Social support. Social support allows us to process our thoughts and feelings as well as develop effective coping strategies. Social support can also reduce a sense of shame and isolation.
- Self-compassion. Show ourselves empathy, patience, gentleness, and encouragement. Recognize our humanity as well as that of others.
- Gratitude. Be grateful for all the blessings in our lives to maintain a balanced perspective.

In essence, integrating acceptance and change into our lives requires resiliency. In this way, being resilient means we need to anticipate that our life's journey will include moments of joy, excitement, laughter, and intimacy as well as heartache, grief, and loss. With the assistance of people who care about us, we need to find the courage to embrace the difficulties in our lives with humility, patience, and self-compassion, rather than frustration, self-criticism, and judgment.

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