



"Man never made any material as resilient as the human spirit."

- **Bern William**

Got Resilience? (Like the Got Milk? Bumper Stickers)

It's the positive capacity to cope with stress and catastrophe; the ability to bounce back after a great difficulty or disruption. Read on for some practical tips on building your" resilience muscle"

If you met her, you might think her life had been golden. My dear friend for over 30 years (I'll call "Janet") is 80+, active in the lives of family, friends and many young people. She still drives, cares for "an older lady" (!) She writes personalized letters of encouragement that lift your spirits and recharge your faith. Luckily, I am on her list. Consistently upbeat and marked by joyous laughter, you might presume that life had dealt her an easy journey. You would be wrong. A suicide death in her family, the business reversal of her husband (losing their lovely home and retirement nest egg), health issues with her husband and his recent death, the death of her beloved daughter in an auto accident at a young age and relationship challenges with another family member are a few of the challenges

Another woman in my life, a client and a CEO, has overcome tremendous odds: Abuse, setbacks, divorce, and no resources as a single mom at a crucial time in her life. None of these circumstances stopped her from realizing her goals and potential, including getting her undergraduate degree and master's degree in her late 50's and early 60's – all while leading an organization through troubled times.

Why it is that faced with the same set of challenging circumstances, some people crumple in a heap while others go on to realize their dreams and goals? Those who cultivate the ability to "bounce back" practice some important attitudes and behaviors we can learn from:



The Howells Group, Inc.

Bringing Business to Life

- 1. Set a deadline on negative “processing.”**
You’ve got to acknowledge and process your real feelings. That’s good mental and emotional health. But learn to limit the time spent thinking and talking (especially brooding), about your adversity. Give yourself just 15 minutes to get it out of your system. Based on my experience, the less you replay the event, the faster you’ll feel better and get back on your feet. The wisest man that ever lived reminds us still today that, “As a man thinketh, so he/she is.” Thanks, Solomon for that pithy proverb that rings true centuries later.
- 2. Surround yourself with “balcony people.”** Avoid “basement people.” Balcony people listen, then cheer us on and point to what is possible. Basement people focus on what is wrong. “Basement people” are often practiced in self-pity and have perfected victim thinking. So choose to be with people who inspire and uplift (like “Janet”) and limit those who seem to gobble up your energy quickly.
- 3. Replace thoughts of your adversity with positive steps.** Focusing on the areas within your control, develop a plan for “recovery”. Whether it’s landing a new job, speaking up assertively to your boss next time, or meeting a new partner. A plan helps you gain positive momentum. Take a first low-risk step today. Don’t do it next week. Do it today, ideally right after reading this. Any small step forward is more productive than staying in mourning too long.
- 4. Refuse to give fear any foothold.** Remember that FEAR is False Evidence Appearing Real. Fear feeds on itself and warps our perspective. Usually things I fear never happen! Even if they do, giving in to fear is a no win proposition. Having truths you can return on a regular basis help you stay resistant. Also, having faith in God and deep spiritual truths has been shown by many research studies as crucial for resilience over time in people’s lives. Faith, not fear, provides hope, healing and positive expectancy for a brighter future.
- 5. Get and Give Support.** It’s easy to turn inward and isolate when life hits the skids. Some solitude is healthy – but receiving and offering support within a supportive community is crucial. Personally, I’ve found over the last three years that receiving is much more difficult than giving. Scared of being “needy” I resisted initially. But, a cancer diagnosis, a son struggling with health issues and a near death experience with a staph infection brought me to my knees. Without support from close family, friends, clients and my spiritual community I would not have made it through.