

10 Tips for Strengthening Your Emotional Resilience



As my son Jake was about to start school, a lovely friend of mine, Natasha, said to me, 'You'll love school!'

My first thought was how I looked forward to buying new school books each year at K-Mart and how I loved buying books from the school book club (book buying is now one of my addictions, but I digress).

What I didn't realise was that I'd also love some of the funny little ways that, through my son's schooling, I'd learn more about myself. Reading about his school's You Can Do It! program has been one of those moments.

I thought a nice place to start this article is sharing how they explain resilience to kids. 'Resilience means knowing how to stay calm and being able to stop yourself from getting extremely angry, down, or worried when something "bad" happens. It means being able to calm down and feel better when you get very upset. It also means being able to control your behaviour when you are very upset so that you bounce back from difficulty and return to work or play.'

OK, so how do we do that as adults? Not a lot differently to kids really, but sometimes not as well.

Here are ten ways to strengthen your emotional resilience. Some are drawn from the **You Can Do It!** program and others from my own life experiences and my work as a coach:

- **Keep things in perspective:** Avoid blowing painful or difficult situations out of proportion and view them as part of the varied fabric of your life. In many cases, especially when a situation can change for the better, ask yourself 'What would I like this to be like instead?' Rather than focusing on the drama in the situation, take whatever action you possibly can to move toward the best possible outcome.
- **Turn away from self-defeating thinking and turn to rational thinking:** Here are three examples from the You Can Do It! program of rational ways to think to increase resilience: It's not as bad as you think it is' thinking - 'It's not the worst thing that could happen to me'; 'I can stand it' thinking - 'I don't like it, but I can stand it'; and 'I can do it' thinking - 'I'm more likely to be successful than to fail.'
- **See the meaning or lesson in difficult situations:** When a door closes, look to see what opportunity or learning is available to you. For example, a tight financial situation can be an opportunity to step back and create a budget to allow you to make new choices and be satisfied with how you're managing your finances.
- **Maintain a sense of humour:** Sometimes laughter is the best medicine. Look for opportunities to smile or even laugh, where possible, to help lift your mood and outlook.
- **Spend time with, or speak to, trusted friends, or talk to supportive professionals:** Seek out people who can provide support and comfort to you and will listen to you if you need to express your emotions. Spending time with like-minded and caring people will also lift your energy.
- **Have an internal locus of control:** Reinforce your belief in yourself and in your own inner resources. Know that you are the thinker in your head and mostly in control of what you think and do. You have choices in any given situation.



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- * **Be patient:** We all need to do things and endure life experiences at some time that aren't of our choosing or that we find challenging. Be patient. Remember that this too shall pass.
- * **Take time out to exercise and to relax:** If your body and mind feel depleted from lack of sleep, lack of fresh air, lack of exercise or a lack of time to yourself to replenish your energy, your resilience will be lower than if you consciously build more of these things into your day. Get out in nature and sit under a tree and take in your surroundings. Empty your mind of all thoughts and just breathe.
- * **Make your own self-care a priority:** Be assertive and ensure that your personal needs are being met. Eat nutritious food, stay well hydrated. Listen to music. Do some EFT. Meditate. Practise yoga. Immerse yourself in any other activity that you love to help you to get centred.
- * **Persevere:** Sometimes just adopting the motto 'The way to get through it is to go through it' can help. See any obstacles that come up as challenges to overcome.

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