

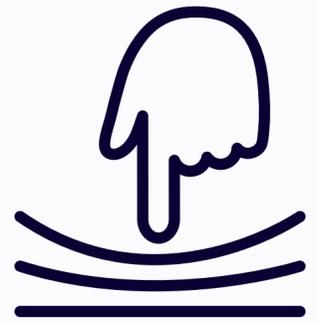
The Development of Resilience



MINDSPACE

What is resilience?

The Oxford English dictionary tells us that resilience is the *capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.*



And the

ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape.

The Psychological interpretation or view of resilience lays its definition within a framework of mental health. An individual's capacity to withstand stressors and not show any psychological dysfunction, low mood or persistent negative thoughts.

I am not too sure that I agree with the totality of that. To not show any psychological need at a time of intense or continuing difficulties If you do, you are bracketed as having symptoms that suggest mental unwellness sounds rather unreasonable. The capacity to withstand pressure without impact on self sounds like a tall order, or is it? We all experience degrees of life events that push us to the limit, but is it not more realistic to consider the dictionary's explanation that it is our capacity to recover from these experiences that should be a factor in our resilience, not that we might feel low or have a period of pessimism?

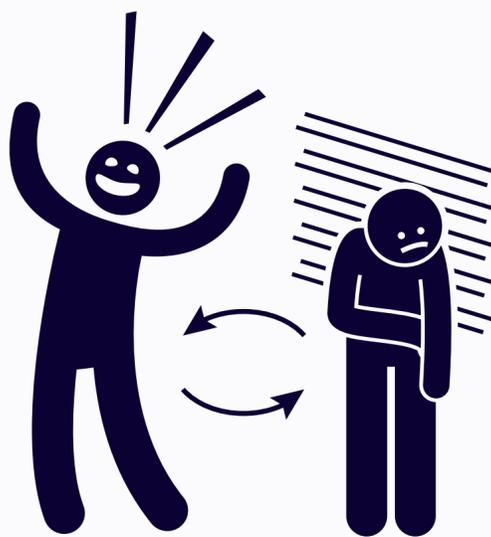


The Development of Resilience



MINDSPACE

Some of us are more resilient than others. But there are lots of variables or situations within our coping ability. Exhibiting some signs of distress does not manifest as lack of resilience, but perhaps a sign that someone is stretched to capacity, has been managing, but needs a little bit of positive feedback or an understanding from someone to give us the perseverance and strength to keep going. If you live within a supportive relationship it may be easier to be resilient because you can share your worries. You may have found a better way of managing stress, started to take some responsibility for your situation. Our stressors may seem a piece of cake to the next man, or woman, but they are your stressors and they are causing you concerns. So, Resilience can perhaps be less to some than to others. You may have a pessimistic outlook, but you are still coping in your way.



Resilience in my mind is about strength of purpose and resolve. It does not just appear as an innate quality but can be developed and built. We all have the capacity to grow, develop and understand ourselves at whatever age. Our resilience, as I believe is developed, or not, through life experiences and the confidence to understand and trust ourselves and I can assure you I have been tested at times to the edge of my resilience.

The Development of Resilience



MINDSPACE

I was the middle child of three having two brothers. Home life was difficult and subsequently, I was very shy, anxious and withdrawn. This state of affairs continued into my late teens, but I got better at hiding it. I recently met with a friend who knew me when I was eighteen. He recalled me as being so quiet and keeping myself apart from others.

At eighteen, I started my training in mental health, as a nurse and also married a boyfriend who I thought would “look after me” and I could have a new family through him. Well it did not work out. Surprise, surprise and subsequent relationships fell by the wayside generally due to my lack of confidence and long-standing insecurities and neediness.



The first change occurred after the birth of my first child. For the first time in my life I felt I had developed an identity for myself. I loved looking after this little person and her need for me helped me to understand the roots of my own insecurities. I confronted my father, who had been the main protagonist in mine and my brothers' lives. I did not disintegrate and I felt I had grown another 2 feet. I even dealt with the negative commentary that continued for several years after this event.

Not only was I a mother, but I was gaining some recognition through my work which helped to re-enforce a more positive view of myself.

The Development of Resilience



MINDSPACE

Four children later, and having developed a better understanding of me, I started to feel I could take the knocks and still carry on. I started to positively process the happenings in my life and rather than dwell on them, tackle them, I stopped feeling that I was to blame for everything and became stronger and more resilient to life's up's and down's and unexpected outcomes. There was a period about five years ago when I felt my resolve and strength were really tested. My daughter became ill, I had a car accident, I was striving to finish a degree and also working full time and I found I had Cancer. I went through a period of being very fatalistic, what will be will be. However, I took a few days away after surgery and stayed in a cottage on my own. That first day walking on the beach, I got attacked by a dog and spent the rest of the holiday in hospital recovering from a rather enormous dog bite, well it was quite big. I rang a friend to share my woes and as I was telling her we both started to laugh at how bizarre the whole episode which lasted four months had been. It was yet another palmer drama as we decided to call it. Now don't get me wrong, it has not been a bed of roses and I have shed tears and occasionally felt hard done by. That's ok as long as you can move on and that is key to developing resilience.

It was a tough time and had that happened some years earlier, I feel would not have reacted the way I did I also had the love of my four wonderful children with their own unique ways of helping me to laugh and stay on top. I was actually quite embarrassed and uncomfortable when people said oh you are so strong, or you have been through a lot.

The Development of Resilience



MINDSPACE

Many people have been through a lot worse and fill me with admiration. Also, individuals who manage to make very brave and life changing decisions after a long period of passive acceptance, they deserve a real pat on the back.

I had learnt resilience through life experience and believed I could sink, which had been the earlier scenario, or swim which is what I am more inclined to now. We develop our own levels of resilience.

For me it had to do with recognition of who I am, to stop leaning on the past and to have responsibility for where I found myself. You can be hit by challenges, you may feel low. That you can get yourself around this, learn from the experience, develop and move on is the important thing. As the dictionary says, "spring back into shape!" Some days you may be more resilient than other days. Go easy on yourself accept the days that are not so great and celebrate the days you have resilience.

Rachel
Adult Recovery Facilitator

