



Resilience & Mindfulness ~ What is it?

Remember Your Resilience

Recall a time when you thought, “No. No. No. This cannot be happening.” You probably felt emotions of angst, overwhelm, disbelief, or stress. You may have felt stuck, hopeless, or out of control. And we know the thought of having no control can be debilitating. And it can keep us from moving off the mark of stuck-ness and away from problem solving if we let it.

Now, recall a time when you got through it – whatever the challenge or stressor was. Acknowledge what became possible in your life when you moved from the chaotic thoughts to embracing your resilience? When you changed from ruminating on how this (policy or regulation) is not fair, not fun, and shifted your thoughts and actions to get up and keep going. You overcame the disappointment or frustration. You managed to pivot from despair to resolve. You worked through the problem and things worked out the best they could.

I bet you used some strengths in your actions and in your mindset to get through the problem. That is resilience. Resilience is a quality that allows people to get through tough times and to keep on going, perhaps becoming even stronger than before. Resilient people are flexible to change. They can improvise. And can even find meaning in adversity. Research proves resilience is a learned skill rather than a personality trait. It involves paying attention, thinking, and behaving.

Having resilience allows you to fly over any pity-party and soar higher. This is a part of being emotionally intelligent. You are not stuck in a holding pattern of just wishing things were different. You keep things in perspective and are on the lookout for solutions. Your ability to be optimistically curious, positive, and happy, no matter the circumstances contributes to success in your personal and professional life. Remember your resilience and work toward increasing it.

A few ways to increase your resilience include finding purpose, being proactive, helping others, and responding skillfully when emotions are high. Your profession and your role as a Peer volunteer include all these traits.

Mindfulness Increases Resiliency

Mindfulness is also a way to increase resiliency. Mindfulness is about being awake, aware, and present, and focused on the current moment. It is purposefully bringing your mind to the now. It is not a time to reflect on the past or to plan goals for the future. It is noticing what is right in front of you. It is a skill of paying attention and being conscious of your thoughts, without judging them. It is about keen observation without criticism.

Our mind is like a snow globe filled with lots of things flying round. And the world is full of distraction and noises and other people's agenda. Mindfulness is a kind of compassionate observation of yourself, of your own mind. Not a worry or care about exterior environments or circumstances. It encourages you to break some of the unconscious habits of thinking and behaving in ways that do not serve you and keep you from living your best life.

Research at companies like Google, Aetna and Intel have shown that increasing mindfulness in the workplace can decrease stress levels while improving focus, thoughtfulness, decision-making abilities, and overall well-being. Mindfulness gives employees permission and space to think — to be present — leading to mental agility, resilience, and self-awareness. In addition, mindfulness can reduce emotional exhaustion, increase openness to new ideas and develop compassion and empathy.

Further, research published in *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance* show the "Protective Effects of Emotional Intelligence and Proactive Coping on Civil Pilots' Mental Health", reporting lower levels of anxiety and depression. Emotional intelligence is increased with mindfulness meditation – a mental training practice that teaches you to slow down racing thoughts, let go of negativity, and calm both your mind and body.

To practice mindfulness, for starters, being aware of your breathing slows down your mind, and puts a calming weighted blanket around the world. You can realize that your thoughts come and go. And let them. You are not your thoughts. And certainly, do not believe every thought you have. If your mind wanders, just come back to the present moment. Mindfulness is also not about living in auto-pilot mode. And it is not about turbo-charged living every moment. It is about slowing down and checking in with yourself. Awareness of thoughts allows for better decisions, thus better outcomes.

Unplug. Turning off your phone and other noise is essential for mindfulness. It is difficult to spend quality time with yourself when there are distractions all around. This might be even more important this year, as it seems like there is more bad news every day with the pandemic. Turn off the news, step outside, put on some of your favorite music and spend uninterrupted time with yourself.

Practice gratitude. Another especially holiday-relevant way to practice mindfulness is by taking time to think about what you are grateful for. Use this time to focus only on the good things in your life. This will keep you happier and in a positive mindset. Make sure to also focus on the people you are grateful for, as this will give you a clear indication of who you want to prioritize spending time with.

Mindfulness and resilience complement each other and build upon each other. Wherever you are, be there. That is mindfulness. If a challenge were to erupt, pause, take a breath, and reframe it as an opportunity to learn something. You are more resilient than you know.

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