

Resilience Practices 1

Resilience is a powerful concept. Resilience is defined as the ability to cope with life's challenges, both large and small, and to grow from the experiences, even if they are very difficult. Resilience addresses mental fitness, emotional strength, and the coping tools and practices we find that serve us well. There is no "one size fits all" for adapting to changes in life, trauma that occurs without warning, and overcoming challenges.



Our lives are viewed and framed by our experiences. The outcomes of those experiences also play a role in resilience, and if overwhelmed by challenges, please always seek professional assistance in moving healthfully past the experience. On the more extreme side, some will experience PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) from experiencing or witnessing traumatic events directly. Others may acquire Secondary Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) from living with someone with PTSD, or witnessing the aftereffects of a traumatic



situation. We now know that recovery from less extreme life hurdles is possible with Resilience Practices.

Even if you've had enormous life challenges, it is possible to intentionally reframe your mental perspective through essential practices, two of which we'll share here. The ability to learn, adapt, and move forward when difficult times arise can be enhanced with proven practices. No two people respond to circumstances the same way, and learning how to make small changes to support ourselves and those around us is beneficial.

Resilience is measured by both short and long term coping and communication skills, creating or maintaining a social support system -- and knowing when to ask for help. Asking for help may be the most difficult step of all for many, especially due to culture or circumstances. Vulnerability is difficult for many, but knowing when to ask for help is a strength, not a weakness. We all have limits and building trust and respect among those we work with is invaluable.

Resilience Practice 1: Reframing. Each day, we have thousands of choices to make, and staying "in the moment" helps keep your mind from spiraling into the worst case scenario. For example, the brain is hard-wired to listen to your self-talk. Words you say to yourself matter greatly, and can influence your state of mind. Positive words promote positive thoughts and emotions, and negative ones can attract deeper, more negative thoughts and emotions. You mind "hears" you.

In talking with others from different cultures, there is no simple multilingual example to share. Here is the example in English: If you say to yourself: "I am angry", your brain immediately goes out to the world, seeking proof and validation you are indeed angry. This is a usual "default" for may cause further distress. Adding a single word into that short phrase can create a



calmer brain response. If you add one word to that short phrase, saying “I feel angry”, your brain’s reaction is usually more limited and quieted. Instead of immediately escalating into fury and frustration, the brain instead looks for problem resolution: what are the reasons you may feel angry? Is the cause of the frustration temporary? Are you overreacting and speaking harshly to yourself? What are you able to do right now to feel less angry, frustrated, annoyed, or negative?

Resilience Practice 2: Intentional breathing (or sometimes called Mindful Breathing) is another practical resilience exercise. By focusing on deep breathing with a purposeful pattern, we are distracted for a short while, and the additional focus and oxygen, plus the purposeful quiet is beneficial for many. Breathe deeply in, counting 1-2-3-4, hold the breath for four seconds, and breathe out for four counts. Intentionally breathing for even 2-3 rounds of deep, counted breathing will become a default response – not an emotional reaction.

Resilience is finding healthy, planned ways to alter your behavior from reactions to responses that serve you well. We find renewed purpose, improved good communication, self-awareness, and practices that help us adapt with a more measured response when life intrudes.

Challenge will come in life, and practicing simple ways of reframing self-talk, and mindful breathing may help you. Take these important steps for you, your shipmates, and your family!