

"What's past is past; what's done is done. The important thing is what you can do now to achieve the future you want. This requires a willingness not only to accept change, but also to pursue it proactively."

- From the book "Change Your Words, Change Your World"

This is an amazing quote because it's a wonderful reminder that we can't change the past. However, we can learn from it and let it go. I frequently talk about CHANGE and how WE have the power to make CHOICES to effectuate change we want to see in our lives. Change doesn't usually just happen. We typically have to actively pursue whatever change it is we want. But sometimes change happens when we least expect it and that's such a beautiful thing. Change can give us the tomorrow we've been hoping for but didn't imagine we'd actually get. So starting today, let go of the past and move forward confidently toward the future. I'm here to help if you need some guidance.

Yours in health,



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Be Resilient



Those who are closest to me know that I've had a pretty rough year. And when you're caught up in your own head and your own misery, it can be easy to lose sight of the positive things surrounding you. As a health coach, I'll be the first to admit that life is often difficult and can throw you curve balls you weren't expecting. But what keeps many of us from sinking to the depths of despair during those difficult times is resilience. Resilience is the ability to rebound when you feel as if you've been knocked down. It's what allows you to get back up, even when you think you can't. It's when you bend but don't actually break. So for those of you struggling with adversity, this month, I'm going to give you some tools to help. For some people, resilience is instinctive; they bounce back without even giving it a second thought. But for others, it takes work, practice and repetition, just like anything else we're trying to learn. I'm going to give you five suggestions to help you navigate the path of becoming resilient.

1. **Reach to Friends.** I'm sometimes guilty of NOT doing this, but I've worked really hard to get better at it. I've written in newsletters before about how I have a tendency to "hermitize" myself when I'm feeling down. But friends can truly be a godsend. A strong social network can help on many different levels. I can't even count the number of times in the last year I've reached out to my closest friends so they could "talk me off the ledge" when I was in a negative emotional place. You know who you are. Thank you! Support from people who care about us not only helps improve our coping skills, but it also helps us improve our psychological well-being and our happiness. It also helps us see a clearer path when the way is foggy. Friends can see past the emotional part of what we're experiencing and objectively, without emotion because they aren't actively in it, talk you through how to get to that seemingly elusive light at the end of the tunnel.

2. **Practice Being Optimistic.** My dad used to say, "Act enthusiastic and you'll be enthusiastic." I'd roll my eyes when he said it, but now that I'm older and wiser, I understand what he was saying. People who are optimistic truly believe that their future will be brighter than the present and that their situation will ultimately work out for the best. In order to practice this step, we have to change the way we're used to looking at things. Are we focusing on the problem or are we figuring out how to change it? What's the solution? When you're facing a challenge, especially if it's one you've faced before, think about how you handled it. Were you happy with the outcome? If not, make a change. Think about another time or situation in your life when you felt optimistic and then try to remember how you got there. One of my favorite things to tell people is that if you don't like the record that's playing, change the record. It's really pretty simple. Take a good look at how far you've come and remind yourself that it probably isn't the worst thing you've ever faced. Even if you don't succeed the first time, keep in mind that a setback isn't the end of the story; it's merely one chapter in the book. You're the author of your own book. If you don't like the plot and where the story line is headed, change the story.
3. **Be Flexible.** Being set in your ways will never be your friend. The more attached we are to our way of thinking, our plans and our schedules, the more we feel as if things are supposed to go a particular way. Ultimately, this leads to stress, anxiety and even depression when things don't work out the way we were hoping. This then makes us upset and mad and we end up trying blame others for the way we feel. But feelings are an inside job. You are master of your own emotions. Resilient people tend to be more flexible and more willing to "go with the flow." When something in their life changes, they change with it. But for a lot of people, this is way easier said than done. Think about this for a moment: how many times a day do you say "should" with regard to you or someone else? The word "should" can and often will lead to guilt, shame and even depression, which can then lead to resentment. Once you recognize your "shoulds", challenge them. Ask yourself what it would look like if things ended up a different way. Be willing to make a change in order to get a different outcome. Don't be set in your ways.
4. **Have a Purpose.** People who are resilient tend to have a strong purpose in their lives, which reflects their passions, beliefs, values and strengths. Those of us with children probably have the strongest of all purposes. I know that my most important job is to raise my son to not only be a good man, but to be able to have enough confidence in himself that he knows he can make mistakes and that he can come back from them. It's also my purpose to teach him the skills to be able to fly from the nest that's protected him his entire life. If I did my job successfully, he'll know that even though he can fly and he should fly, those wings can also bring him back home.
5. **Make Time for and Take Care of Yourself.** I have a number of friends and acquaintances who meditate for self-care. Meditation (see my October 2018 newsletter for more detail) has even been shown to have positive effects on the part of the brain associated with memory and learning. This can be helpful as we get older. You can start with as little as 3-5 minutes per day. It's best to sit or lie down in a comfortable place and try to clear your mind of any thought. But this too takes practice. Personally, for my self-care, I tend to go on a long and strenuous hike in the middle of nowhere to get out of my own head and clear it, get centered and find peace. For me, hiking gets rid of any stress and/or sadness that may have sunk its claws into me during the week. I also get a 90-minute massage monthly. It's the one thing I do for myself each and every month and it's a time where I can completely decompress with no distractions.

The strength and resilience of the human spirit can truly be remarkable. Some people are just naturally resilient, while others really have to practice to be successful or even to just take baby steps to begin the process of getting to resilience. One thing I've learned for sure is that no matter how bad things seem to be for you, there's someone who's going through something much worse. The good news is that no matter how far down you fall, you can always pick yourself up and get back to the light at the end of what's often a very long and very dark tunnel. Keep in mind that while you may be going through your own personal hell, maybe, just maybe, you're actually the light in someone else's storm. And that one important fact can help you begin the process of building resilience as you're going through your own personal challenges.

Have a wonderful month.