

Building Resilience Over a Lifetime

No one escapes pain, fear, and suffering. Yet from pain can come wisdom, from fear can come courage, from suffering can come strength - if we have the virtue of resilience.”

— Eric Greitens

The seemingly unremitting COVID pandemic has taken a toll on all of us. In addition to the often-devastating physical consequences, it has had a detrimental impact on every aspect of life. More recently, experts are focusing on the psychological and emotional trauma caused by both the virus and the restrictions necessary to reduce the spread.

The pandemic has been particularly hard on older adults, who may be more susceptible to serious illness. But, information is emerging to suggest that emotionally and spiritually, elders are actually faring a little better than others. Many seniors have adapted their behaviors and taken steps to reduce the risk of being infected with the coronavirus. They are reaching out to family and friends, pursuing hobbies, exercising, and participating in faith communities. It appears that older adults are demonstrating resilience.

The importance of resilience to overall health has been receiving a lot of attention recently, but the conversation has not included a little known fact: older adults have an advantage when it comes to resilience. Aging brings strengths that enable seniors to cope, make better decisions, and even thrive during difficult

times. Life experiences gained over the years tend to protect us and provide stability in times of adversity.

Older adults are familiar with hard times. They have experienced shock and disappointment, failure and rejection, which has made them stronger. They have rebounded from setbacks and overcome hardships. As a result, they are able to maintain a more positive outlook and weather storms with comparatively less turmoil.

Wisdom, resulting from accumulated skills, experiences and knowledge, grows and deepens with age. It helps seniors to respond more effectively to difficult situations. They are able to draw upon and integrate different kinds of information and perspectives better than younger people. They are more practical and less emotionally reactive or impulsive, enabling them to navigate challenges.

Despite their contributions, elders remain an under-utilized resource in our society. Perhaps, this is the time to change that. During these difficult times, older people may provide the pathway to healing and hope. Their resilience, wisdom and more balanced perspective could be put to good use. The coping methods and

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For 50 years, Laureate Group, a local, family owned business has been helping older adults and their families manage the challenges of aging. Laureate Group operates eight senior communities throughout the Greater Milwaukee area. Additional resources can be found at:

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support systems that older adults have developed over their years of living could be shared between generations.

Even when the pandemic subsides, older people could be called upon to help younger people who are feeling stressed. Intergenerational bonds and mentoring programs would help to reduce the pressures of this unusual time. Connections and conversations can promote well-being.

We should learn from and be inspired by both the aging process and the elders around us. This is an opportunity to recognize age as an asset and a source of strength. Many older adults stand ready, wanting to help and waiting to be asked. A resilient resource is waiting in a time of need.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by
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