

Building Resilience

Resilience can sometimes be mistaken for indifference, unaccountability or emotional disconnection but in reality, resilience is the complete opposite of these things. It is the ability to truly face reality, to be responsible for our actions and to be emotionally vulnerable, if necessary. It is the inner strength that enables us to bounce back after facing unexpected challenges or setbacks. Resilience can be equated to mental fortitude and it lives in the small moments, as well as the large ones.

Resilience Isn't Endurance

It can be easy to think that resilience and endurance are alike but they're not really the same thing. While they both require mental or physical fortitude in moments of crisis or challenge, endurance simply hunkers down and waits for the worst to pass. Endurance is employed somewhat momentarily – once the crisis or challenge is over, things return to normal. Resilience, however, says, "I will get through this and come out the other side stronger, perhaps wiser and having gained something of value. Things will have changed, because of this experience." Resilience sees the challenge or crisis is an opportunity for growth and moves confidently towards it.

We don't get to decide if we will deal with life's challenges; they arrive whether we want them or not. But we do get to decide how well we'll get through them and what lessons we'll learn from them. Learning to be resilient means learning to be open, resourceful and accepting of those challenges or changes as they come.

It would be very easy to endure all kinds of trouble and yet learn nothing from it or remain unchanged by the experience. Resilience is what develops from these experiences, if we allow it. We all have the capacity for great resilience yet,

like every acquired skill, it needs to be practiced and challenged in order to grow and develop.

The idea of growing resilience is commented on by James, the brother of Jesus, when writing his letter to the believers in his time.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” – James 1:2-4, NIV

James confirms that challenges are not meant to be just endured; they are meant to change us. We’re being developed into [our authentic selves](#) in Christ and these challenges form part of that process.

Resilience Is The Enemy Of Fear

Learning to be resilient actually means learning to be unafraid of things like failure, rejection, embarrassment or abandonment. At the core of resilience is the ability to be realistic about the potential for things to go wrong, coupled with positive optimism that things will go right. It’s being grounded firmly in the here and now, in reality, but hopeful of better things. It’s learning to deal with all the challenges we encounter with a growth mindset, not a fixed mindset. Resilience is the difference between “I can’t do this”, and “I can’t do this yet”. Resilient people don’t just endure challenges, they’re proactive about moving through them and coming out stronger. Where resilience lives, fear cannot flourish.

Resilience And Faith Are Friends

Hebrews 11 is known as the great chapter on faith. Yet it’s also a list of a great number of individuals who, in essence,

had developed resilience in their life and, because of that resilience, were able to undertake great things.

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.” – Hebrews 11:32-34, NIV

We realise from reading Hebrews 11 that resilience and faith are intrinsically linked. When we choose to believe in God’s existence and His plan for us, we choose to put our faith in something greater than ourselves. This faith forms a large part of accepting God and embracing what He is doing for us. It also gives us a great deal of comfort that we are not alone and that God is working in our lives to bring about our good. Perhaps one of the best ways to start growing resilience, or at least begin our pursuit of it, is to acknowledge that we have worth to God and that He has a purpose for our lives. Continually reinforcing to ourselves how much God really loves us and that our lives are infinitely precious lays down a positive foundation for beginning to build resilience.

“We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.” – 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NLT

How To Build Resilience

There are certainly many practical ways to grow resilience and learning those skills and developing inner strength doesn’t happen overnight. Here’s some ways to start developing your

inner strength and learn to face your challenges with confidence:

Get Friendly With Failure – your ability to cultivate resilience relies on your ability to acknowledge failure, without allowing it to cripple you. We all make mistakes, we don't always get things right the first time. But learning from our mistakes and growing through them is a key aspect of developing resilience.

Use Empathy – taking the time to consider another person's life or situation can really help when dealing with difficult situations or experiences. Instead of reacting in emotional ways, we should try to see things from their point of view and work to support and encourage them. Learning to deal with these people or situations, despite the challenges, develops our own level of resilience and inner strength.

Exercise Forgiveness – forgiveness allows us to move fully beyond a setback or disappointment and leave it in the past. It doesn't mean that we forget the situation. However, instead of feeling victimised or indulging in bitterness or self-righteousness, forgiveness give us an opportunity to learn from the experience and constructively try to resolve the setback. Forgiveness is first and foremost a gift to ourselves. Coupled with learning to forgive is also learning to apologise to those we've hurt or mistreated. This is a crucial aspect of developing our own sense of accountability for the choices we make in our life.

Don't Compare – remember that we are all created as unique individuals and, despite what we may see on social media or how we perceive other's lives to be, everyone has their good days and their bad days! Not only that, we all have different talents and skills, different personalities and different cultural backgrounds. God doesn't require us to be as good as someone else – just the best version of ourselves.

“I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. I am accustomed to any and every situation—to being filled and being hungry, to having plenty and having need. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:12-13, BSB