

Resilience is our ability to bounce back from the stresses of life. It's not about avoiding the stress but learning to thrive within the stress.

Our productivity over the past 20 years has soared, and with this increase in productivity has come an increase in our stress levels. We may sacrifice accuracy and thoughtfulness for immediacy. Our work-life balance has plummeted, and burnout is being felt by many individuals.

Learning to live a more resilient life has numerous benefits including:

- Decreased depressive symptoms & increased emotional well-being
- Improved working memory
- Improved sleep
- Improved immune system function
- Improved relationships
- Improved coping when we experience emotional disruptions

Using the five pillars of resilience is a way to reframe our thinking so that we can see ourselves and the world around us in new ways. We can experience the positive benefits that are a part of living our lives from a place of wholeness.

DECREASING DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS & INCREASING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

We all experience difficult moments in life. Each of us faces disappointment, loss, and change as a part of our everyday lives. Being resilient doesn't mean that these difficult moments go away. What it does mean is that we now have the tools to better cope with life. These tools — such as random acts of kindness — increase our ability to bounce back from the stresses, trauma, and difficult situations that are a part of life.

IMPROVING YOUR WORKING MEMORY

In the past 20 years, our productivity has increased dramatically. We have more resources for information than ever before — most which are just a click away. But immediacy has led to sacrificing attributes such as accuracy and thoughtfulness. Allowing ourselves even 30 minutes during the middle of our day to focus on a single task gives needed rest to our pre-frontal cortex — the part of our brain where our working memory is stored.

GETTING A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

Positive self-care has been shown to lower blood pressure, reduce pain, and produce better sleep. Positivity comes in many forms: Joy, Gratitude, Serenity, Interest, Hope, Pride, Amusement, Inspiration, Awe, and Love. Learning to cultivate these attitudes in our lives can improve not only our sleep, but our overall physical condition.

A STRONGER IMMUNE SYSTEM

One of the functions of sleep (optimally between 7 – 9 hours each day) is to repair and rejuvenate our bodies. Sleep improves our overall immune system function. We are less likely to “catch a cold” if we are better rested. Sleep also triggers the removal of wastes from the cells of our brain by washing it with cerebral spinal fluid — much like the lymphatic system removes wastes from other cells throughout our body. Becoming more aware of the value and purpose of sleep can help us make more informed choices about our sleep.

Science is also showing us that we are more than the result of our genetic make-up. We now know that environmental factors — such as stress — and more importantly our reaction to these stressors influence our response to disease. Our thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes play an important role in our overall health.

NURTURING SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

We all have triggers that can set us off — having someone suddenly merge into our lane of traffic, discovering a mess that was left in the kitchen, or feeling our contributions at work have gone unnoticed again. These triggers are connected to our emotional center, the amygdala, which is located in our brain. The amygdala controls our fight or flight response. Sleep plays an important role in the reactivity of the amygdala. We are less prone to responding emotionally if we are well rested.

Relationships — both personal and professional — can create love and trust, provide role models for us, and offer encouragement and reassurance to help bolster our own resilience and self-care. Positive relationships help us to buffer stressful experiences, provide us with feedback to change our view of life experiences, and help us to cope with stressors to maintain a sense of balance and well-being.

COPING WHEN WE EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL DISRUPTIONS

Learning to reframe our thinking can allow us to respond to these disruptions in healthier ways. Experiencing life from a place of possibility opens us up to opportunities where we can grow, learn, and continue to contribute. It can reshape our purpose and be used to positively impact the lives of others.

Sleep also plays a role in our coping. Sleep can strip away the negative emotions that are often attached to our memories and allows us to form new and healthier memories.