

# What is Resilience?



The word "resilience" generally describes the ability of an object or substance to resume its previous shape after being hit or damaged. In the context of mental health, "resilience" refers to the capacity of people to succeed and thrive, despite experiencing poverty, neglect and/or trauma. "Resilience" can apply to children, youth and adults. Resilient people are able to succeed because they have "protective factors" that help them survive the adversity.

Protective factors come from many things – they can be inherent qualities the individual possesses, such as optimism, self confidence or a strong faith. Protective factors can also come from outside, such as the support of loving family, special friends or caring professionals. Through programs that serve children, youth and adults, ValueOptions® works to enhance and build protective factors in the people we serve.

## Building Resilience

There are many pathways to finding resiliency after a traumatic event or crisis, and several methods overlap with recovery. Here are eight ways to make a good start:

### 1. Accept the trauma and its consequences

Regardless of what event, situation or crisis has occurred; the first step toward building resilience is to accept the situation and deciding to move forward. Instead of getting lost in the negative aspects of the ordeal, resilient people view problems as challenges that can be solved, in a goal-directed structure.

### 2. Manage emotional and physical health

It's no secret that physical exercise can make both mind and body feel better. Stressful situations can cause the body to tense up and raise blood pressure, heart rate, and more. Physical exertion can relieve internal stressors and make the body feel fit. Emotional health can be improved through positive imaging and using self-help techniques such as positive thinking, to combat negative behavior patterns and detrimental reactions. It is important to take charge of emotions, rather than being controlled by them. Resilient people take care of themselves, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

**Recovery is Expected!**

### **3. Become a problem-solver**

Instead of labeling the hardships as hopeless, resilient people find ways to manage them. It's impossible to have control over many things in life, so make positive changes where it is possible – lifestyle, physical fitness, and meaningful relationships. If the situation doesn't lend itself to change, resilient people look for ways to find hope and meaning in their suffering.

### **4. Make and meet goals**

Goals are an essential part of productive living. Setting goals provides a personal interest to pursue and a way to map progress. Depending on the age and stage, the goals can include education, job placement or family development. Even small, incremental goals can provide a sense of accomplishment and hope.

### **5. Develop meaningful relationships**

Resilient people don't let themselves become preoccupied with self-pity after a traumatic event or crisis. They look outside themselves to their natural support systems. Family, friends, community members and even pets can provide love and hope. Also, self-help groups bring people together who have similar problems. Self-help group members help themselves while helping others.

### **6. Focus on the positive**

It's impossible to make the traumatic event go away, but each day can get a little better. Resilient people find a reason to be optimistic and truly believe their lives will improve. Optimistic people also tend to attract friends. In fact, research has shown that optimistic people heal more quickly from diseases and maintain better emotional self control.

### **7. Make personal choices**

Resilient people are empowered to exercise their personal freedom of choice. Voicing personal opinions, thoughts and choices is a step toward empowerment and the individual path to resiliency.

### **8. Find happiness again**

Resilient people take care of mental and physical health, are optimistic, and develop and nurture meaningful relationships. Focusing on short- and long-term goals, while maintaining day-to-day life, is a great way to keep future forward. Resilient people have hope for the future and believe that happiness is possible.

**Recovery is Expected!**