

# Resilience Against Debilitating Change

**Resilience** is the **capacity** to **prepare** for, **recover** from, and **adapt** to **change**, **challenge**, or **adversity**.

- *What is your capacity to absorb the pain of loss before you become dysfunctional?*
- *What resources are available that you might not be using to create energy to move forward?*

**Why do some retreat and others move forward?** Resilience is based on two things...

- *A capacity to survive the impact of loss*
- *A willingness to access available resources*

**Capacity** relates to how much **disruption** you can **absorb** before displaying **dysfunctional behaviors** and **mindsets**. There must be space available to **accept** the **reality** of the **loss**, **embrace** the **change**, and **adapt** to new expectations.

**Resources** relates to the **means** for change. There must be enough **available energy resources** (*physical, mental, spiritual, relational and emotional*) to **adapt** to the new expectations.

Capacity to **withstand** the **impact of loss** is influenced by **losses** from the **past**, especially those **buried** and left **unattended** or **unprocessed**. Unmet expectations also play a role. However, a person's **resilience** in the face of **great pain** is affected primarily by these **five characteristics**:

- **Active Optimism:** *"I can and will find a way through this"*
- **Decisive Action:** *"I understand little; on what I know I can move forward"*
- **A Moral Compass:** *"In my gut I know what is right and what is wrong"*
- **Tenacity & Determination:** *"I will not give up; I refuse to quit"*
- **Interpersonal Support:** *"I cannot do this alone and will seek help"*

Ask yourself the question, *"To what extent do I see the above five characteristics of resilience at work in my life?"* Your **capacity** to **absorb** the **disruption** caused by grief & loss will be in **direct proportion** to the **presence** of these **five characteristics**.

**Resources are available** to help **create new levels of energy** to produce **new, healthy expectations**:

- **Physical Energy** to meet the body's demands caused by stress, sadness, loss, etc.
  - Simple exercise, quality sleep, hygiene, healthy eating and drinking in moderation
- **Mental Energy** to discern what is happening and choose next steps
  - Creative expression in crafts, music, meaningful conversation, reading, writing, meditation
- **Spiritual Energy** to connect the change to meaning and purpose, and something larger than self
  - A connection to complete acceptance, unconditional love, forgiveness, and what's next
- **Relational Energy** to allow trustworthy people to love and support you
  - Managing the mutuality of relationships that drain or charge your batteries



- **Emotional Energy** to absorb the impact of feelings like loss, fear, hopelessness, anger, etc.
  - Self-regulation of breath and emotion; choosing thoughts that inspire love & trust

**Adjusting** to change is not about **learning to like** the new situation, but **producing energy** to form **new, healthy expectations** that help **move you forward** in life despite your **new reality**. Moving forward requires the following:

- *Capacity for **resilience** against being overcome by the loss or change*
- **Connection to healthy people and available resources**
- *A **desire** for life to return to **normalcy***

Sometimes you can **see adversity coming**, and other times it **ambushes you**, dropping you to your knees. When either of those result in a long-term modification of your life, you find yourself **forced into change** you didn't ask for and do not want.

- *The **death** of a loved one or **divorce** in a marriage*
- *A personal **health crisis** or the loss of a **job***
- ***Moving** away from a **home** or **loved one** for whom you care deeply*

These kinds of change are generally experienced as **devastating losses** caused by forces that **affect you profoundly** and are **beyond your ability to control**. When devastating loss strikes, the response of some is to **retreat** into **anger, resentment** and **hopelessness**. Others find **acceptance** of the loss, an **honest appraisal** of their emotions, **care** for themselves, **new expectations** from life, and a **connection** to a greater meaning and purpose.

When there is a **significant, life-altering change**, a substantial **discrepancy** between **expectations** and **reality** is triggered. Moving forward "*business as usual*" is **not possible** because the **amount of change** is overwhelming. **Initial reactions** to this kind of **loss** may involve **shock, trauma**, and powerful **emotion**. Where there is very little **capacity** for change, what may follow are **debilitating emotions, isolation**, and even **complete shutdown**.

**There is hope** for building resilience against overwhelming loss and change. **Create capacity** to absorb pain and **connect to resources** that help you move forward. **You can do it!**

Some ideas in this article re capacity and resources originated from the work of Daryl Conner.

See <http://www.connerpartners.com/frameworks-and-processes/how-do-people-learn-to-adapt-to-change> for more.

Five characteristics of resilient people from the book, **Stronger: Develop the Resilience You Need to Succeed**, by [George Everly Jr.](#), [Dr. Douglas Strouse](#), and [Dr. Dennis K. McCormack](#)



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