

Feeling drained? Here's 5 tips to boost your resilience

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Have you ever seen a bee that is struggling to fly? As kids on summer holidays, I vividly remember where we mixed water and sugar, trying to help the bees to revive and give them an energy boost. I can't recall if it actually worked, but this made me think that so many can relate with the sense of "feeling drained" especially over the past couple of weeks.



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When thinking about resilience, we need to remind ourselves it is not about grit and tenacity. It is more than that.

Resilience is about growing during a process of challenging situations to the extent that you not only bounce back but are able to operate at a higher level than before the challenge.

Here are 5 tips to boost your resilience:

1. Reset your rhythmic living

Make a conscious decision to prioritise a rhythmic living - it will boost your wellness and build resilience. Not sure where to start? An easy step to start with is your sleep rhythm. To go to bed and wake up at the same time every day – yes, even over weekends. This sleep rhythm is as essential as the rhythm of your heartbeat. So, next time when the alarm goes off, don't be tempted to press the snooze button. Rather, get up and start your day.

Over a period, you will start to notice how you will be able to cope with more just due to having a consistent routine and sleep pattern.

2. The magic of movement

Many people still have a misconception that exercise is something we do, primarily for physical benefit. The research is clear: exercise stimulates the growth of the brain - especially if you are older. Your body and brain require you to move and stretch for at least 150 minutes per week. It sounds like a lot, but it is actually only 30 minutes for 5 days.

When you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins interact with the receptors in your brain that reduce your perception of pain and stress receptors. Endorphins also trigger a positive feeling in the body.

Exercise also enhances the brain / body connection to build resilience. The Neurozone team has released a study, specifically looking at behaviours related to resilience since the start of the lockdown, and it revealed that exercise and its duration, has shown the largest increases in a likely positive effect on resilience compared to earlier data.

3. Embrace the power of deep breathing

The secret to thriving in life is simply to be aware when you operate in survival mode.

Think of a straight line. Ask yourself if you are operating above or below the line?

Whenever you are worried, anxious, or overwhelmed in a specific situation, you are operating below the line. You are above the line when you thrive or flourish; where you can think clearly or not experience the “trapped” feeling.

An easy way to flip between above or below the line, is to consciously start to breathe deeply and ask yourself a question. For example, “what small step can I take right now to move closer to finding a solution?” This will help you to switch on the pre-frontal cortex to solve problems and not be driven by the “reptilian” brain or amygdala that is steering our behaviour during stress (or fight or flight response).

4. Cultivate optimism and curiosity

An unstoppable quality to have is to believe that there is always a silver lining in every situation. Similarly, to remain curious when things go wrong is as critical. Be deliberate to look for the benefit in the situation.

Sometimes a mindset reset is what is needed to overcome blockages. The brain continuously assesses and assigns the amount of energy needed to achieve any set goal. Your belief in your ability to achieve a goal influences the brain to assign more energy to it. Make lifestyle adjustments that reduce chronic stress (perhaps an art-class or Pilates classes) which can contribute to a happy mood state.

Ask the question “What brings me joy?” Engage in activities and challenges that interest you. How can you prioritise more of those activities to support you in reducing your stress levels?

5. Eliminate toxic thinking

Our brains are like Velcro for negative experiences - it is easy to obsess over the negative, until you make it a daily practice to shift your attention to past successes. “Negative thoughts are addictive in the same way as drugs and

alcohol. They reduce the dopamine that is released when you achieve your goals. As a result, you will have less energy and motivation to do anything goal-oriented.”

Shift your attention to and reflect on:

- Choosing to celebrate your strengths and seeing life as a series of opportunities.
- By being intentional to build stronger memories around the good things that happen in your life.
- By shifting your focus to the positive you will find that everything starts to change for the better as you select the lens you view the world and circumstances.

These are small easy steps to take and by making these lifestyle adjustments you will reduce stress and contribute to building your resilience every day. It is the small adjustments that will be the big changes over time.

ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

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