

CHANGES MODULE 18:

Tips to increase your resilience

Resilience is an inner strength which helps us to cope with setbacks in our lives, such as developing an illness, losing a job or the death of a loved one. We cannot always avoid every obstacle, challenge or change in life, but we can increase our resilience in coping and learn how to bend with pressure instead of breaking. Having resilience is not just about bouncing back, but about adapting so that you are more prepared to handle stress in the future.

How to build your resilience:

Find meaning and learn

Find meaning in adversity and learn from it. Sometimes we learn and develop the most due to difficult circumstances in our lives. During challenging times become a problem solver and ask yourself positive questions such as 'What are my choices here?', 'How can this be improved/solved?' and 'What can I learn from this?' rather than negative questions such as 'Who is to blame?'

Take care of yourself

During periods of stress we can sometimes neglect ourselves. Remember to eat healthily, get enough sleep, keep active and take part in activities you enjoy. Keeping your mind and body healthy is the foundation for increasing both physical and emotional resilience, so we are in the best condition to face life's challenges.

Accept change

It is important to stay positive about change as change is a part of living! Life may throw us challenges and you may end up in a situation that you are not able to fully control, but you can change your attitude towards it. Try to see the positive aspects of change, in that it allows you to grow and learn, and also understand yourself better.

Make connections

Having a social network can allow you to gain valuable support, advice and encouragement, which will help with remaining hopeful through more difficult times. This can be through family or friends, or local support groups and volunteering organisations.

Helping and supporting others and listening to their experiences will also be beneficial in increasing resilience.

Believe in your coping abilities

Human beings can be very resilient and cope with many unthinkable things, but often we underestimate our coping abilities in certain circumstances. The more you feel you can handle situations the fewer reasons there are to be fearful. So next time you find yourself worrying about the 'What ifs', say to yourself 'I'll handle it!'

Draw on your experience

Think back to when you may have coped with a difficult situation in the past. Ask yourself what you learned and think about anything you did, or strategies that you used, that helped you to improve or overcome it. You can then develop a set of reference tools for the future to help you adapt and handle difficult times.

Discussion

What has helped you build resilience?

Further reading/resources:

- *A Man's Search For Meaning* is a book by Viktor Frankl in which he writes that “we cannot avoid suffering but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward with renewed purpose”.
- ‘The Three Secrets of Resilient People’ is a great Ted Talk by Lucy Hone, a director of the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience. After the sudden death of Lucy’s daughter, she turned to her academic profession to foster her resilience in her personal circumstances.
- ‘What is Resilience and Why is it Important to Bounce Back?’ by Courtney Ackerman - <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-resilience/> .