

## **Resilient Warriors are Created in Times of War, Not Peace**

#WellbeingWarriors

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Anonymous Quote: "When you can't control what's happening, challenge yourself to control the way you respond to what's happening. That's where your power is."

You have two choices when faced with adversity. One, you can let it define you and your life. Or two, you can use it to contribute to your personal growth and development (like adding fertilizer to soil or making lemonade from lemons). The most resilient people are often those that have experienced many difficulties in their lives. No-one is exempt from adversities. Nobody can avoid pain and discomfort, although it is a normal human reaction to try. It is therefore more helpful to develop resilience, instead of trying to falsely hope nothing bad ever happens to us. [Studies](#) show that resilient people are able to manage their emotions, keep calm in difficult situations and seek out opportunities for growth. Instead of asking "why me?"; ask "what can I learn from this?"

So, knowing that resilience is developed during difficult times, and not when everything is going well, this lockdown period may be the perfect time to work on your resilience. The whole world is living and functioning in a completely new way and we do not know what will happen in the future. We are all faced with uncertainty and situations are constantly changing. The important choice we need to make, is what we are going to do to help us cope during these disruptions.

### **DID YOU KNOW:**

Resilience can be defined as:

- "Being able to bounce back."
- "The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness."
- "An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."

### **WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE**

#### **1. Self-Regulation**

Self-regulation means controlling one's behaviour, emotions, and thoughts in the pursuit of long-term goals. In short, this means thinking (pausing) before acting. When we pause, we are able to reflect on our values and rather act according to that instead of our emotions. Being able to regulate yourself when faced with a challenge often means the difference between coping and not coping. A resilient person still feels pain and negative emotions, they are just able to choose healthier ways of dealing with it.

For example, instead of binge-drinking after an academic or romantic disappointment, you rather choose to reach out to your support system or reflect on what worked and what didn't

work. Other self-regulation activities include exercising, self-compassion and cognitive reframing. To learn more about self-regulation skills, click [here](#).

## 2. Cognitive flexibility

Cognitive flexibility is mental shifting that allows you to adapt quickly to changes or new situations. Now more than ever, we need to be able to adapt to our constantly changing situation. Being flexible means you are able to look at difficulties with a different perspective. You are able to see opportunities for growth, instead of just focusing on the negatives.

Cognitive flexibility also assists us in:

- Developing empathy (being able to see a situation from someone else's perspective)
- Seeing solutions to problems instead of feeling stuck in our circumstances
- [Tackling perfectionism](#) (which is often characterised by rigid thinking patterns)

## 3. Hope (it's not only a feeling, it is an action)

Many people think of hope as an emotional state. In many ways this is not incorrect, but it is not completely correct either. Although feelings are essential in the process of hope, so too are action and thinking. Simply stated, hope is a mindset that is developed by: a) feeling motivated to achieve a goal or creating energy to pursue a goal that is important to you and; b) finding or creating different ways to achieve the specific goal.

To develop high hope you need to believe in your ability to achieve a certain outcome or goal, you need to believe that this goal is within your reach, and you need to creatively find different ways to move towards your goal and to overcome obstacles during this process.

How do we develop high hope?

- Set [SMART](#) goals
- Put it somewhere where you can see it daily (like on your mirror/fridge)
- Build motivation and momentum by completing [small & achievable goals](#) (Start your day by achieving a small goal such as making your bed)
- Practise positive self-talk
- Take a [self-motivation quiz](#) and learn how and in which areas you need to cultivate more motivation.
- [Schedule](#) daily tasks and [track your progress](#)
- [Learn how to](#) overcome obstacles
- [Eliminate distractions](#) (Research says rather switch your cell phone off AND [hide it away](#) instead of just putting it on silent)

Quote by Desmond Tutu: "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."

#### 4. An Attitude of Gratitude

Developing an [attitude of gratitude](#) holds the potential for building your resilience during difficult times, as well as making you a generally happier person. In fact, research shows that gratitude can improve relationships, increase physical and psychological health, improve sleep, increase self-esteem, increase empathy, reduce aggression, and build mental strength.

**What is gratitude?** There are many different definitions for gratitude. For our purposes, we'll define gratitude as: "A positive emotional experience or attitude that results from appreciating and noticing what is good, valued, or positive in life and especially our lives." For instance, if you wake up in the morning and take a moment to appreciate that you are alive and healthy, that is gratitude.

Gratitude can also be expressed through behaviour - by saying thank you to someone. Practicing an attitude of gratitude does not mean that we ignore or deny that life is difficult. It means that we deliberately choose, no matter the circumstances of our life, to also acknowledge what is good, what is working, and what is valued. Keeping a gratitude journal is one way of cultivating an attitude or mindset of gratitude.

Quote by Brené Brown: "I don't have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness - it's right in front of me if I'm paying attention and practicing gratitude."

#### Keep a Gratitude Journal

Once a week, write in a gratitude journal, highlighting three to five people, activities, situations or things that you appreciated during the week.

Here are some tips to help you with your gratitude journaling:

**PROTIP 1.** Be specific: Reflect on your week and visualise the person, act, event, or thing for which you are grateful. Recount specific details, words, or actions, and how it felt. For example, instead of merely writing "I am thankful for having a loving girlfriend", I could rather be more specific: "When my girlfriend and I spoke on Tuesday, it was sunny and warm, she paused a moment after I shared a story about kindness, and then proceeded to tell me how she loves that I appreciate the small things in life. She sounded happy and her words made me feel loved and appreciated".

**PROTIP 2:** Focus on people you are grateful for, rather than things. This tends to elicit greater gratitude rewards than when we express gratitude for inanimate objects. It does not have to be someone you know personally or have interacted with directly.

**PROTIP 3:** Consider how things could potentially be worse. Focusing on why something could be worse leads to gratitude. Focusing on how it could be better leads to envy. One study showed that imagining how things could've been better made people view themselves as unlucky and elicited feelings of envy. Imagining how things could've been worse made people view themselves as lucky and elicited feelings of gratitude.

Resilience is not only for recovering from difficulty or bouncing back from adversity, it is also about preparing ourselves. Like a tree that continuously grows its roots stronger and deeper so as to withstand eventual storms and gale winds, it takes deliberate mental and external action and commitment on our part to build resilience. There are many different ways to cultivate resilience, mostly you need to utilise the power of your mind and the energy of your soul. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said: "That which does not kill us makes us stronger."

What makes the difference, is how we approach failure or difficulty. Resilience can be [developed](#) in various ways - not only when bad things happen. You can develop a [resilient mindset](#) right now!