



Student Wellness Services

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Resilience can be defined as a positive outcome in the face of adversity (i.e., challenge, change).

Let's consider for a moment that wellbeing is like a seesaw. In life, people are exposed to and experience a range of stressors, both positive and negative, that can influence wellbeing. We can think of resilience as the influence we can have over how easy it is to tilt the seesaw of wellbeing in one direction or the other. Stressors have the potential to decrease wellbeing and resilience serves to enhance wellbeing.

Resilience-building strategies include healthy coping skills, strategies, supports, and perspectives an individual can draw on as one responds to challenges and change. Resilience is partly a skill that can be

1) Mindset refers to the perspective we bring to our experiences that shape our actions and thoughts. So often when life is not going well, we can get stuck in zoom mode, only focusing on the bad things that are happening. It's helpful to remember to back up into panoramic mode, looking at the long term perspective, the bigger picture of one's life and experiences, and identifying opportunities for learning and growth. Bad times are only temporary; having faith and trust in the future becomes essential.

2) When some people face a setback, they give up because they believe it's a sign they never had "what it takes" or they might hold a fatalistic perspective. This is referred to as *fixed mindset* – the belief that people essentially are who they are and don't change. Science has shown us that our brains are

- 4) Priorities contribute to our sense of meaning and purpose in life, which contribute to our overall sense of happiness and motivation. Priorities are also dynamic and will change as context changes. When we go through change or adversity, it is helpful to pause and reflect on our current priorities. Reassess if the priorities you had still hold true for the current context.

Consider asking yourself: If my life could focus on one thing and one thing only, what would it be? If I could add a second thing, what would that be? A third? A fourth? A fifth? Once you have a good sense of your current priorities, see if you can develop some SMART goals that will help you move forward with your priorities. Remember, SMART goals are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

- 5) Life inherently involves suffering. Being resilient does not mean being happy all the time or avoiding pain and sadness. These are normal human emotions that are normal reactions to suffering. We want to allow space for these emotions. Our resilience can be enhanced when we also find space alongside the suffering for gratitude. Thinking about those things we are grateful for re-orientates our focus on the positives, improves mood, speeds coping, and enables faster meaning-making that supports healthy adaptation. Based on positive psychology research, purposefully looking for the good around us when there seems to be none is a useful tool for enhancing happiness.



Consider keeping a gratitude journal and when you identify what you are grateful for, also take a minute to think about what was so important or so great about that thing/experience? What we discover is that it isn't so much what happened that mattered, but it is the meaning we give to the experience that influences how the experience impacts us. We can further benefit from gratitude by sharing it with others. Next time you meet a friend for coffee, consider starting the conversation by asking your friend "What went well today?"

- 6) All humans have emotions and they're there for a reason. Emotions are a normal part of our information-processing system: They bring colour to life and help us understand our experiences and social interactions. Sometimes we can become overly attached to a particular emotion, or try and avoid certain painful emotions. This just makes the emotions grow and can contribute to greater suffering.

Instead, see if you can acknowledge the emotion when it arises. You might try naming the emotion (e.g., "This is sadness" or "I'm feeling overwhelmed"). Then ask yourself what the emotion is trying to tell you about your current experience and what it might be asking you to do differently. For example, sadness may be seeking comfort; overwhelmed might be seeking calm and control. When you've identified what the emotion might be seeking, consider one step you might take to meet that need.