

PRESS RELEASE

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NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY CAFÉ

Improving Your Resilience

Optimism and resilience seem like two things we're either born with or we're not. But that's not quite the whole picture. Resilience has been studied for decades and is shown to involve adaptability and a willingness to see the world for what it is (Southwick & Charney, 2015). This is as true for people with the most radical PTSD and phobias, as it is for those who have not been as seriously challenged in their lives.

You can tell if you are resilient by your coping strategies. Individuals who consider themselves a victim of their circumstances and dwell on hard challenges rather than workable solutions often turn to unworkable coping strategies, such as substance abuse, domestic abuse, and denial and isolation. People often say that they engage in those behaviors because they feel powerless in the situation. That's a myth. Abuse, denial, and isolation are all harnessed power, you can't do any of those things without exercising your power.

On the other hand, individuals who are resilient recognize that life normally brings challenges; however, these folks meet the challenge head on and find workable solutions. These folks know the world is scary, but what they do differently is they determine what parts of the problem they can't change and then seek out ways to use their personal power positively to improve their situation in ways they can manage.

Resilient people grab hold of a platform that provides them with alternatives. They:

- Focus on a moral compass that is based on a sense of right and wrong. They think about how they can help others, rather than just how bad their own situation feels.
- Stay a part of community and get social support. If they don't have one, they find a way to connect, often through figuring out how they can help those around them. The community can be large or small – family oriented, religious, practical (like a food bank or animal shelter). The community naturally supports its members very strongly and so the participants feel better too.
- Learn from positive and negative role models. They see what works for other people they admire and build on beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors they find inspiring. Conversely, they take note of role models that they don't want to become.
- Maintain physical fitness or establish a routine to gain it. This has been found to be especially effective for those with PTSD and phobias and works on a number of levels to improve outlook and overall health.

It turns out resilience and optimism are choices, not personality types. While the pandemic drags on, we have to find better ways to cope. Take small steps, step away when you get angry, get some exercise – even if that is just walking to the end of your driveway. Get out of your self and into the world again. Eventually, the world will open back up. In the meantime, find ways to be good to those around you, so you can better adapt and be more successful over the long haul.

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Press Contact:

Marya Roddis
Resource Development
575 235 8228
marya@psseniors.org

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