



Building resilience.

Life throws a lot of demands and pressures at us and responding with resilience offers a positive solution. What is resilience, and how do you learn it if it doesn't come naturally? This factsheet answers these and other questions to help you build resilience.



What is resilience?

Resilience refers to our ability to cope with life's challenges. A popular concept in wellbeing, resilience is having the emotional or psychological resources to deal with change and stress. While some people may seem to deal with pressure better than others, there are actions we can all take to improve our resilience.

Taking care of our wellbeing enables us to feel more equipped to deal with stress and how it affects our mood. If you feel better in body and mind, you're more likely to be able to cope and bounce back if things don't go the way you expect.

Start with the basics

Stress is our response to pressure caused by an event or situation. Our bodies produce stress hormones, cortisol and adrenaline, which are designed to protect us from a threat. This is known as the fight or flight response.

When we feel under pressure or strain, it's important to go back to basics. Are you eating well, taking exercise and getting enough sleep? If one or more of these areas is getting neglected, it really affects your ability to be resilient.

Making small changes to what you eat, how much you move and how you sleep will add up to a big difference in your ability to practise resilience.

Build your physical resilience

According to a 2019 Norwegian study, introducing even just a little regular movement into your daily life delivers a range of health benefits.

People who exercise regularly don't just improve their physical health and wellbeing, their mood and self-esteem get a boost too.

Exercise actually changes our brain chemistry, reducing levels of cortisol in our body and producing feel-good hormones endorphins.

Practical tips to boost resilience

Know your triggers

Think about times you have felt it difficult to cope in the past. Are there particular events which trigger negative feelings? Being aware that certain behaviours are likely to cause you stress is the first step towards dealing with them.

Try not to ruminate

Rumination is a common response after something unpleasant, unexpected or traumatic happens to us. We relive the experience mentally, which causes us repeated pain. It can be difficult to prevent our brains from revisiting a bad experience, but with sustained effort, we can change the narrative. Meditation or distraction are both ways you can quieten ruminating thoughts.

Be kinder to yourself

All of us reflect on how we interact with others, and it's normal to think about the decisions we take. If you're experiencing stress, your brain can tip into overthinking and anxious patterns of thought.

Practise self-compassion: instead of judging yourself, treat yourself kindly, as you would a friend. Reward yourself and celebrate achievements, rather than engaging in punishing thoughts.

Build your network

Reaching out and talking to others about our feelings makes us feel less alone.

Tell your family or a friend if you're having a hard time. Sharing a problem can help you feel less overwhelmed.

Knowing you have access to a network who will listen to your worries helps you build resilience.



Making something worthwhile out of painful times helps your resilience grow.

NHS website