

In life, we're always going to go through hard times – it's one of the beauties of the human experience. How we respond during those times is really what matters and building our resilience as we move through particularly hard seasons of life will be the difference between just surviving or actually thriving as we come out the other side. **Resilience can be taught** – science has proven that there are many ways we can build our resilience, both between and during, times of stress and uncertainty. Anytime you can focus on building resilience within yourself, you'll be growing and setting yourself up with a stronger ability to thrive through tough times.

## 14 Science-Based Resilience Building Activities

(Source: PositivePsychology.com, <https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-activities-exercises/>)

1. **Storytelling:** We can adjust our paradigms by re-creating narratives we tell ourselves. Consider an example in your life where you continue to repeat a story that produces worry or anxiety. Try writing out a new version with a more positive interpretation. Recognize how you feel in the process.
2. **The Upside of Stress:** In her book, *The Upside of Stress*, Kelly McGonigal (2011) recognizes that seeing the upside of stress is not all about differentiating if it is all good or all bad. Rather, it is about how choosing to see the good in stress how you can use strengths to deal with challenges. Think of one of the most difficult events of your life. How you can use this story to help others. How can you leverage it to impact someone in a positive way?
3. **Find your Ikigai:** Finding meaning in one's environment is an important aspect of resilience. Dan Buettner, who founded Blue Zones, also has done worldwide research. In studying women of Okinawa, Japan, it was discovered that one of key reasons for their longevity is their strong sense of purpose. Okinawans are known for pursuing their ikigai which is a concept meaning "reason for being", or "reason for waking up in the morning." (Buettner, 2005). The graphic and exercise in the [worksheet](#) can help you clarify your meaning, purpose, and mission in life while considering practical concerns of maintaining lifestyle, earning a living, etc. Here is the worksheet and template to walk you through this reflective exercise.
4. **Purpose Check-Up:** If you have already tapped into purpose, consider doing a short check-up exercise that allows for you to reflect, take inventory, and recharge. The purpose checkup activity is available [here](#).
5. **Strengths and Gifts:** Research proves that identifying and leveraging strengths enhances resilience. A study led by Sherry Hamby of the Life Paths Appalachian Research Center in Monteagle, Tennessee highlights the importance of a strengths-based approach in helping people recover from trauma (Hamby et. al, 2018). Take this [free survey](#) to capture your key character strength or ask 5 people close to you to send in writing what they see are your top strengths.
6. **Perform Acts of Kindness:** Sonya Lyubomirsky research shows that one of the best ways to boost happiness and resilience is to perform acts of kindness, volunteering, mentoring, or even expressing gratitude toward others (Lyubomirsky, et. al, 2005).
  - Consider a formal volunteering program in an area you are passionate about.
  - Pick one person a day to show extra kindness to
  - Display random acts of kindness, i.e., paying for a stranger's coffee

## WELLNESS WEBINAR

### Science of Resilience

#### A Hero's Journey

7. **Gratitude:** The practice of gratitude is one of the most time-tested and proven methods for enhancing resilience. One study published in the *Clinical Psychology Review* confirmed the benefits of habitually focusing on and appreciating the positive aspects of life on resilience and well-being. (Wood, et. al, 2010). Every day for the next week, write down 3-5 things each day that you are grateful for or Write a letter of gratitude to people who are special to you.
8. **Three Good Things:** According to Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001), positive emotions can help broaden your momentary thoughts, actions, and attention to your surroundings. One example of this is to foster positive thoughts and emotions. Says Barbara Fredrickson, PhD, the author of *Positivity* (2009). Consider ending your day by reflecting on and writing down 3 good things that happened today. Be intentional about reflecting on the experiences, noting how you felt, and what was the best thing about the experience.
9. **Design a Flow:** "Flow" is the term used by researchers for optimal states of consciousness, those peak moments of total absorption in an activity ([Csikszentmihalyi](#), 1997). Research across various domains has shown the positive impact of experiencing a flow state on resilience. Seek out a new flow experience that optimally engages your attention and leaves you with a sense of accomplishing a goal.
10. **Find Something Funny:** Laughter has been found to boost resilience. A study evaluating humor induced positive psychology interventions identified the benefits of incorporating daily humor activities to induce laughter reduced depression and increased joy for participants, even months later (Wellenzohn, et. al., 2016). Spend 10 minutes each day for 7 days on the following exercise:
  - a. Write down the three of the funniest things you have experienced, seen, or heard that day. Provide detail and note how they made you feel. If you can't think of anything, do an online search for funny stories or anecdotes. Social media can be a good source for funny material.
  - b. Write down why you found it funny. The more specific you are, the more effective the exercise will be.
  - c. Write these three funny things at the end of your day. Doing so will foster a new habit and may help you absorb the emotion more as you are going to sleep.
11. **Find the Silver Lining:** Looking at the bright side is scientifically proven to enhance our resilience. In a 2014 study, participants who went through such an exercise increased their resilience, were more engaged and experienced decreased negative thinking (Sergant & Mongrain, 2014). Think about an upsetting experience you have had recently. Rather than focusing on the frustration of the experience, reflect on three positive things about it.
12. **Engage in New Mindfulness Practice:** Mindfulness is defined as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).
13. **Body Scan:** Body scan is one form of mindfulness meditation, focused on the physical experience of mindfulness. It is a technique that hones your attention on different areas of your body to gain awareness and optimize your sensation.
14. **Self-Compassion:** We are often most critical of ourselves and quicker to show compassion to those hurting around us. How we respond to our own stress and challenges is important. Research findings indicate that self-compassion skills promotes resilience and serves as a protective emotional mechanism (Trompetter, et. al., 2017). Think of a difficult circumstance in your life that has been concerning you. Write down some details about the event. What would you tell a friend in that situation? What tone would you use? What actions would you take?

## Become a self-awareness superhero

You can't control how your brain works but you can understand it – and use that intel to change the way you relate to others and show up in the world. [Emergenetics](#) is a neuroscience-based psychoanalytic tool that identifies how you think – how your brain processes information, and how you show up in the world. This tool will teach you about your unique characteristics and how your awesome qualities are so valuable to your workplace, your family, and your community. You'll learn that everyone thinks differently than you do – that we all approach the world in different ways – and you'll learn how to use your remarkable strengths to work together and contribute to your environment in influential and significant ways.

## Books to deepen the learning

I often say my biography should read: "She was born. She learned to read. She did things with what she learned. Someday she'll die." 😊 I've always been a big reader and in times of uncertainty, books (and Google) are definitely the first place I turn to as a way to manage. A few books that have really helped me navigate this season in my life are below – worth checking out if you're also a reading enthusiast.

- ☑ [Resilience by Eric Greitens](#)
- ☑ [Mindset by Carol Dweck](#)
- ☑ [Grit by Angela Duckworth](#)
- ☑ [Learned Optimism by Martin Seligman](#)
- ☑ [Making Hope Happen by Shane Lopez](#)

## I intend to...

Stating our intentions is the best way to ensure we actually follow through on an action. To increase your probability of taking an action, complete the following sentence:

I intend to **(action)** so **(reason for taking action)**.