

# WELLNESS TIPS

## STRENGTHEN YOUR SENSE OF RESILIENCE

Although everyone responds to stress and adverse events differently, in general they cope and adapt over time, in part due to resilience. The American Psychological Association defines resilience as the “process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress”. It is the ability to “bounce back” and can involve personal growth.

Although some people are more resilient than others, resilience is not a personality trait or quality that is either present or not. We all have a sense of resilience and it can be further developed and strengthened. Many strategies for strengthening resilience take time, just as training for a marathon does. But other strategies can be used in more immediate stressful situations.

### Ways to Strengthen Your Sense of Resilience:

#### Connecting with others:

1. **Maintain contact.**

Family and friends help you remember that you are not alone. Student organizations or volunteer work can provide a sense of purpose and satisfaction. Some find support from their faith community.

2. **Seek assistance when needed.**

Reach out when you are in the midst of a painful experience. Talking with others - family, friends, peers, mentors, professional counselors - can help with problem-solving and managing your situation.

#### Healthy Thinking:

3. **Pay attention to your thinking and challenge irrational or inaccurate thoughts.**

Typical unhelpful thinking patterns include catastrophizing, negative predictions about the future, and self-blame or blaming others.

Ask yourself: Are these thoughts helping me? Are they increasing my level of stress? What would \_\_\_\_\_ say if I shared this thought? Do I have any evidence that contradicts this thought?

4. **Recognize that your self-worth is not dependent on your achievements.**

Being a medical or PA student, high achievement, and honors may be important and feel good, but they are not who you are or how worthy you are.

5. **Recognize areas in which you do have control.**  
You might not be able to control aspects of difficult and challenging circumstances, your surroundings, or others' decisions, but you can control how you respond to and manage your circumstances.
6. **Differentiate what is urgent vs important.**  
Being able to prioritize allows you to focus your attention and energy.
7. **Keep a journal.**  
It can help you clarify your thinking.

### **Focus on Wellness:**

8. **Take care of yourself physically – nutrition, exercise, sleep.**  
It is difficult to think clearly and problem-solve when you are tired or exhausted and are not eating well.
9. **Avoid negative outlets for minimizing emotional distress.**  
Alcohol, drugs, or other substances may mask uncomfortable feelings short term, but on-going use can interfere with one's ability to cope effectively.
10. **Use Stress Reduction techniques.**  
Deep breathing, mindfulness, exercise, taking time outdoors in nature, engaging in relaxing activities, journaling. See previous Wellness Tips.

Being resilient does not mean events are not experienced as difficult or emotionally painful. Change is a part of life, things happen that cannot be remediated, and sometimes goals are no longer attainable. Accepting what cannot be changed will help you refocus to new goals and how you can begin to move forward. Making an effort to notice any small positive changes or improvements will help you maintain a hopeful outlook. Recognize that this time will eventually pass.

If you feel persistently overwhelmed or stuck, depressed or overly anxious, seeking assistance can help you move forward.

American Psychological Association. "Building Your Resilience." February 1, 2020.

<https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>

Keane, Aoife. "What is Resilience?" July 19, 2016.

<https://www.changeboard.com/article-details/16347/what-is-resilience-/>

Check the MSCC Website for past Wellness Tips <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>

Feel free to contact the MSCC to talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment for questions and concerns.

Stay safe and stay well!

Liz Schacht [elizabeth-schacht@uiowa.edu](mailto:elizabeth-schacht@uiowa.edu)

Medical Student Counseling Center [osac-mscc@uiowa.edu](mailto:osac-mscc@uiowa.edu) 319-335-8056 1240 MERF