

# *What Is Radical Resiliency?*

Interest in resiliency has grown tremendously in the past couple of decades. Much has been written, researched and reviewed regarding depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. However, psychologists often tend to look at ‘what’s wrong’ with people instead of embracing ‘what’s right.’ Rather than focusing on what makes people sick, the most important answers may lie in understanding how and why people stay well.

Why do some people persevere? What allows some people to face adversity with panache? What separates those who emotionally thrive and those whose spirit withers and dies? We are about to examine the negative effects of stress—and the therapeutic modalities that enable individuals to become resilient.

It is now well established that protective psychological factors are needed to prevent illness. As a matter of fact, it is estimated that 75 to 80% of all doctor’s visits are precipitated by stress. The good news is that individuals who struggle with depression, anxiety, illness or trauma can now learn how to successfully overcome their distress by focusing on the characteristics that resilient people adhere to during times of stress.

Dr. Janoff-Bulman, who is a pioneer of resiliency studies states, “If inner core beliefs can be restored to some degree, if individuals can rebound from extremely hurtful events, they may be better able to cope with future painful experiences.” When people acquire the tools to effectively overcome trauma, they are much better at dealing with trauma the second or third time around.

This book intends to shed light on how individuals can face adversity effectively and meet crises ‘head on’—so they can thrive and prosper in spite of it.

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Life is all about change. Regardless of your station in life: your age, your financial status, or any other measuring stick that you wish to use, you are continually going through changes of one kind or another. I believe that there are three different types of changes:

- Intentional Change
- Unintentional Change
- External Change

Let’s look briefly at each one.

*Intentional changes* are changes that you make by conscious decision. They are generally positive changes, moving you toward becoming the person you want to be. They include major life decisions such as:

- going to college
- choosing a career
- deciding where to live
- getting married
- starting a family
- pursuing hobbies
- committing to an exercise program
- starting a diet

Hopefully, you devote a good deal of time and energy in making these decisions.

However, *unintentional changes* can sneak up on you and manifest themselves in your life by unconscious decisions or by default. These are not changes that you plan on. As you can imagine, they are usually negative.

Your health—mental or physical—is a good example.

- choosing to forgo exercise
- getting inadequate sleep
- failing to stick to a healthy eating program.

All of these cause unintended negative changes. Other examples of unintentional changes include staying at an unfulfilling job, or in a toxic relationship.

Often the reason individuals remain in negative situations is that it takes time and effort to make a change, and making a change can be terrifying. Oftentimes, people have to get to a boiling point before they finally decide to make the changes that they need to make.

*External changes* are those in which you have no control. They can be negative or positive. Negative external changes may include events or conditions such as:

- a poor economy
- a natural disaster
- an illness
- an accident
- the loss of a loved one.

Positive external changes, on the other hand, include wonderful gifts such as receiving an inheritance or profiting from a healthy economy.

The key for living a happy, fulfilling life is to decide how you will manage change. The more goals you set—by writing them on your intentional change checklist and fulfilling that list—the happier your life will be.

Conversely, the more situations that pop up on your unintentional change list, the less satisfied you will be.

Successfully removing items from the unintentional change category and moving items into the intentional change category (by changing an attitude or a behavior—or both) will govern the state of your health and well-being. How you handle external changes, both negative and positive, will also factor into your happiness quotient.

Resilient people have mastered change and the art of moving through it. They have discovered the power of ‘Radical Resiliency.’

So, just what is radical resiliency? It is the awe-inspiring ability to overcome challenges and lead an extraordinary life. In my workshops, I teach people how to develop these skills, not only to survive, but to thrive.

I am often asked how I was able to put my life back together after I suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and lost my eyesight. People often imply that must have superhuman powers to have overcome such a traumatic experience. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I am an average guy, with average hopes and aspirations, who was very happy cruising through a rather comfortable life when, unfortunately, the wheels came off. At that juncture I had two choices: I could either fall into a deep pit of depression (and believe me, there were many times that I wanted to do just that), or I could embrace what I could still do and make the best of it.

Over time, I figured out that I could still accomplish 80% of the things I could do prior to the auto accident that took my sight. True, I have to do most of them in a different way—and it may take me longer to finish—but I can still do them. So, which would I rather focus on- the 20% of the things that I cannot do, or the 80% of the things that I still can?

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

~ John Wooden

With the help of Kristi, my family and friends, and the Lord, I have been able to focus on the positive. I have been able to live what I consider to be an extraordinary life. I would even argue that I am living a more rewarding, fulfilling life than I was living before I lost my sight.

“As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him,

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned,

or his parents,  
but that the works of God might be displayed  
in him.”

~ John 9:1-3

The obvious question is, how can you be resilient? Are these skills hard-wired from birth? Are they only available to the super strong? The super wealthy? The super lucky? The answer is: NO! The good news is that these skills can be developed before, during or after a crisis. Why wait? You can start building those skills now.

Studies show that more than two-thirds of individuals lack basic resiliency skills that are needed to overcome adversity. But don't panic! The reason you don't have these skills is that you probably never needed them. But what if you begin building those skills immediately so you are ready for any curve-balls that life may throw at you? If life's difficulties buck you off the horse, no problem. Just dust yourself off, mount the horse, and get back in the race.

### The Resiliency Triangle

Each of us probably knows at least one person who has been dealt blow after blow, but they continue to get up and move on. What makes these people so strong? How are they able to deal with one crisis after another? There are three primary characteristics that resilient people possess. We define them as 'The Resiliency Triangle'.

- **Positive Attitude**
- **Commitment to Accomplishing Goals**
- **Strong Support System**

Next, we will drill down into these three vital elements to show you how to create your own Resiliency Triangle.

“I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed.”

~ Booker T. Washington