

# The Skinny on Personal Resilience

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She was crying and complaining, "Woe is me." Yes, that is me whining some days and perhaps you, too. Many of us think that if we didn't have hardship, we would be truly happy. Not so. Your life is meant to be rewarding, happy, meaningful *and* challenging. A meaningful life isn't just handed to you all at once. It comes as you develop resilience. Resilience refers to your ability to cope with, adapt to and rise above hardship and crisis.

It also refers to a cluster of *protective factors* or *interdependent capacities* which function like a reservoir of stress-hardiness resources. Resilience is strengthened as you nurture and develop a sense of yourself, of your personal strengths and become impassioned by what you want to have, do and be.

"In the last 50 years, the U.S. population has seen an increase in their standard of living, such as having more money, owning more homes and cars and living longer. But our sense of meaning, purpose and satisfaction with life have not gone up, they have gone down."

**Martin Seligman**

In the 1980s Dr. Martin Seligman, author of ***Authentic Happiness*** and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania were interested in preventing depression and promoting resilience. The resiliency strengthening skills they identified were so successful that they are now learned not only by students but by adults in their workplaces around the world. My own data, as described in ***From Woe to WOW: How Resilient Women Succeed at Work***, confirms research findings—those who strengthen their resilience and stress hardiness:

- are healthier physically emotionally, mentally and socially
- feel more content in relationships
- are more successful at work and home

Not one of us is resilient all the time to all the same challenges. You may find *doing marriage* easy while your friend slugs through serial relationships. You may struggle with small workplace mistakes while your colleagues breeze through them. The literature on resilience speaks of the human ability to toughen up, to accept situations as they are, to explore choices and to take action while primarily maintaining a positive expectation. These resilient basics can be learned. Here is a sampling:

## **One: Protect Your Self**

1. Establish clear boundaries
2. Align with integrity
3. Choose *your* best life rhythm



## **Two: Practice Self Care**

1. Think optimistically
2. Attend to your body
3. Lighten up!

## **Three: Effectively Think and Communicate**

1. Be a dear with two ears: listen
2. Speak up
3. Ease conflict

## **Four: Take Action**

1. Champion change
2. Acknowledge and demonstrate your strengths
3. Demonstrate courage

## **Five: Develop a Strong Support System**

1. Give and receive acknowledgement
2. Get a little help from your friends
3. Nurture a supportive love relationship

Some say, "Resilience is one percent heredity and 99 percent persistence." You can persistently use resilience-strengthening strategies to help you retrieve the best of yourself. Celebrate the strategies you have in place and take action to improve the rest.

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Woe to Wow—Solutions for Resilience

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