



RESILIENCE THROUGH ADVERSITY

Quick guide of resilience tips and pointers to help the development of resiliency skills

Compiled by **Rabbi Yehuda B. Kamenetzky M.ED.,NCC**



Dear Parents,

Have you ever wondered why some people seem to remain calm in the face of disaster while others appear to come undone? People that can keep their cool have what psychologists call **resilience**, or an ability to cope with problems and setbacks. Whether it is due to social issues, job loss, financial problems, illness, natural disasters, medical emergencies, divorce, or the death of a loved one lo aleinu, resilient people are able to utilize their skills and strengths to cope and recover from these problems and challenges. Do know that these people experience distress, grief, or anxiety like other people do. Yet, they are able to handle such difficulties in ways that foster strength and growth.

Now more than ever, it is important to learn about the skills that resilient people possess, and how we, as individuals, families, and communities, will become stronger, more productive, and united, in the face of the current global climate.

I have put together a quick guide to resilience with tips and pointers to help in the development of these important skills.

Sincerely,

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RESILIENCE

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Resilience (or resiliency) is our ability to adapt and bounce back when things don't go as planned. Resilient people don't wallow or dwell on failures; they acknowledge the situation, learn from their mistakes, and then move forward.

According to the research of leading psychologist, Susan Kobasa, there are three elements that are essential to resilience:

1. **Challenge** – Resilient people view a difficulty as a challenge, not as a paralyzing event. They look at their failures and mistakes as lessons to be learned from, and as opportunities for growth. They don't view them as a negative reflection on their abilities or self-worth.
2. **Commitment** – Resilient people are committed to their lives and their goals, and they have a compelling reason to get out of bed in the morning. Commitment isn't just restricted to their religious or spiritual beliefs, it is also about their work, their relationships, their friendships, and the causes they care about.
3. **Personal Control** – Resilient people spend their time and energy focusing on situations and events that they have control over. They put their efforts where they can have the most impact, which enables them to feel empowered and confident. Those who spend time worrying about uncontrollable events can often feel lost, helpless, and powerless to take action.

Another leading psychologist, Martin Seligman, looks at resilience a bit differently. He spells it out in these terms:

- **Permanence** – People who are optimistic (and therefore have more resilience) see the effects of bad events as temporary rather than permanent. For instance, they might say "My boss didn't like the work I did on that project" rather than "My boss never likes my work."
- **Pervasiveness** – Resilient people don't let setbacks or bad events affect other unrelated areas of their lives. For instance, they would say "I'm not very good at this" rather than "I'm no good at anything."
- **Personalization** – People who have resilience don't blame themselves when bad events occur. Instead, they see other people, or the circumstances, as the cause. For instance, they might say "I didn't get the support I needed to finish that project successfully," rather than "I messed that project up because I can't do my job."

Dr. Cal Crow, the co-founder and Program Director of the Center for Learning Connections, identified several further attributes that are common in resilient people:

- **Resilient people have a positive image of the future. That is, they maintain a positive outlook, and envision brighter days ahead.**
- **Resilient people have solid goals, and a desire to achieve those goals.**
- **Resilient people are empathetic and compassionate, however, they don't waste time worrying what others think of them. They maintain healthy relationships, but don't bow to peer pressure.**
- **Resilient people never think of themselves as victims – they focus their time and energy on changing the things that they have control over.**

How we view adversity and stress strongly affects how we succeed, and this is one of the most significant reasons that having a resilient mindset is so important. The fact is that we're going to fail from time to time: it's an inevitable part of living that we make mistakes and occasionally fall flat on our faces. The only way to avoid this is to live a shuttered and meager existence, never trying anything new or taking a risk. Few of us want a life like that!

Instead, we should have the courage to go after our dreams, despite the very real risk that we'll fail in some way or other. Being resilient means that when we do fail, we bounce back, we have the strength to learn the lessons we need to learn, and we can move on to bigger and better things.

The good news is that even if you're not a naturally resilient person, you can learn to develop a resilient mindset and attitude.

Here are some ways:

1. **Get enough sleep and exercise, and learn to manage stress.** When you take care of your mind and body, you're better able to cope effectively with challenges in your life.
2. **Practice thought awareness.** Resilient people don't let negative thoughts derail their efforts. Instead, they consistently practice positive thinking. Also, "listen" to how you talk to yourself when something goes wrong – if you find yourself making statements that are permanent, pervasive or personalized, correct these thoughts in your mind.
3. **Practice Cognitive Restructuring.** Change the way that you think about negative situations and bad events.
4. **Learn from your mistakes and failures.** Every mistake has the power to teach you something important; so don't stop searching until you've found the lesson in every situation. Also, make sure that you understand the idea of "post-traumatic growth" – there can be real truth in the saying that "if it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger."
5. **Choose your response.** Remember, we all experience bad days and we all go through our share of crises. But we have a choice in how we respond; we can choose to react negatively or in a panic, or we can choose to remain calm and logical to find a solution. Your reaction is always up to you.

6. **Maintain perspective.** Resilient people understand that, although a situation or crisis may seem overwhelming in the moment, it may not make that much of an impact over the long-term. Try to avoid blowing events out of proportion.
7. **Learn to set smart, effective personal goals.** It's incredibly important to set and achieve goals that match your values, and to learn from your experiences.
8. **Build your self-confidence.** Remember, resilient people are confident that they're going to succeed eventually, despite the setbacks or stresses that they might be facing. This belief in themselves also enables them to take risks: when you develop confidence and a strong sense of self, you have the strength to keep moving forward, and to take the risks you need to get ahead.
9. **Focus on being flexible.** Resilient people understand that things change, and that carefully-made plans may, occasionally, need to be amended or scrapped. They look at their failures and mistakes as lessons to be learned from, and as opportunities for growth. They don't view them as a negative reflection on their abilities or self-worth.

Overall, resilience gives us the power to overcome setbacks , so that we can live the life we've always imagined.

Stay safe and be well, with Hashem's help we hope to see you back in yeshiva very soon!

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