

**DEVELOPING RESILIENCE: OVERPOWERING AND RISING FROM SETBACKS**

**Anu J. Vengal**

Assistant Professor, Titus II Teachers College, Tiruvalla- 689101

**Abstract**

Adversity is a fact of life. Resilience is the most important quality that allows some people to come back at least as strong as before even after being knocked down by life. Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make a person resilient, among them a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback. Research shows that resilience has significant effect on the academic achievement of the learner. It gives people access to their own cognitive resources, enabling cool-headed analysis of what might have gone wrong and consideration of behavioral paths that might be more productive. Resilience is not some magical quality; it takes real mental work to transcend hardship. Studies show that the elements of resilience can be cultivated. Understanding the components and adopting effective learning strategies in classrooms can build resilience in learners.

**Key Words:** Resilience, Achievement, Classroom strategies

**Introduction**

I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work. – American inventor, Thomas Edison

In spite of struggling with "failure" throughout his entire working life, Edison never let it get the best of him. All of these "failures," which are reported to be in the tens of thousands, simply showed him how not to invent something. His resilience gave the world some of the most amazing inventions of the early 20th century, such as the phonograph, the telegraph, and the motion picture. Research on resilience has grown rapidly since the last decade, particularly in developmental psychology, family psychology, counseling, rehabilitation and clinical psychology. Resilience has been conceptualized as an individual characteristic (Werner, 2000) and the term resiliency has been used to refer to good, stable, and consistent adaption under challenging conditions (Masten, 1994).

Recently, some researchers have considered the resilience as a domain specific concept. This approach suggested different aspects of resilience, such as academic, emotional, behavioral, etc. Academic resilience took more attention between different aspects. Wang, Haertel & (Walberg, 1994) suggested the academic resilience as the heightened likelihood of success in school despite environment adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences. In other words, resilient students sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school and ultimately dropping out of school (Alva, 1994). So the role of motivation may be central to educational resilience (Ruiz, 2002).

The present article discuss about resilience: what it is? why we need it? and how to develop it? so that resilience can be developed in learners which influence their achievements.

**What is Resilience?**

When faced with hardships in life, how does a person cope or adapt? Why do some people seem to bounce back from awful events or loss much more quickly than others? Why do some people seem to get "held" in a point in their life, without the ability to move forward?

Psychologists have long studied these issues and have come up with a label now we are familiar with: resilience. When faced with a tragedy, natural disaster, health concern, relationship, work, or school problem, resilience is how well a person can adapt to the events in their life. A person with good resilience has the ability to bounce back more quickly and with less stress than someone whose resilience is less developed.

Everybody has resilience. It's just a question of how much and how well you put it to good use in your life. Resilience does not mean the person doesn't feel the intensity of the event or problem. Instead, it just means that they have found a pretty good way of dealing with it more quickly than others.

### **The Importance of Resilience**

Resilience (or resiliency) is our ability to adapt and bounce back when things don't go as planned. Resilient people don't stumble 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 (1979), there are three elements that are essential to resilience:

**Challenge** – Resilient people view a difficulty as a challenge. 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.

**Commitment** – Resilient people are committed to their lives and their goals. Commitment isn't just restricted to their work – they commit to their relationships, their friendships, the causes they care about, and their religious or spiritual beliefs.

**Personal Control** – Resilient people spend their time and energy focusing on situations and events that they have control over. Because they put their efforts where they can have the most impact, they 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, says the way that we explain setbacks to ourselves is also important. It is explained in terms of pessimism and optimism. This "explanatory style" is made up of three main elements:

**Permanence** – People who are optimistic, 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 (2010), the co-founder and Program Director of the Centre 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 intensely affects how we succeed, and this is one of the most important reasons for having a resilient mindset.

### **How to build your Resilience**

Studies shows that everyone can learn to increase their resilience abilities. Like any human skill, learning greater resilience is something that we can do at any age, from any background, no matter our education or family relationships. All it takes is the willingness to do so.

American Psychological Association suggests that even if a person is not naturally resilient, they can learn to develop a resilient mindset and attitude. To do so one should incorporate the following into their daily life:

- Get enough sleep and exercise, and learn to cope with stress. When you take care of your mind and body, you're better able to cope effectively with challenges in your life.
- Practice thought awareness. Resilient people don't let negative thoughts upset their efforts. Instead, they unfailingly 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. Practice thought awareness to change the way that you think about negative situations and bad events. Practice thought awareness. Every mistake has the power to teach you something important
- Choose your response. 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.
- Maintain perspective. Resilient people understand that, although a situation or crisis may seem crushing the moment, it may not make that much of an impact over the long-term. Try to avoid blowing events out of proportion.
- Learn to set smart, effective personal goals. It is very important to set and achieve goals that match our values, and to learn from our experiences.
- Build your self-confidence. Resilient people are confident that they are going to succeed sooner or later, despite the setbacks or stresses that they might be facing. This belief in themselves also enables them to take risks.
- Develop strong relationships with your colleagues. People who have strong connections at work are more resistant to stress, and happier in their role. This is important in personal life too.
- Focus on being flexible. Resilient people understand that things change, and that carefully-made plans may, occasionally, need to be amended or discarded.

## **Mindfulness and Resilience**

As we become more mindful, we broaden and build several inner resources that help us strengthen our resilience (Fredrickson, 2001). These include:

Compassion. You hold the intention not to judge yourself or others. You are mindful of your self-talk. If mindfulness brings the wisdom to see clearly, then compassion brings a loving heart (Neff, 2011).

Acceptance. You increasingly accept the facts, which you can differentiate from feelings. Acceptance isn't about giving up. It is having the strength to let go of control and stop fighting reality.

Openness. You are progressively open to viewing even the most difficult situations as opportunities for growth. You trust that they have something to teach you, and you expect to learn.

Creativity. You draw on your power to visualize and create the results you desire. At the same time you are not attached or fixated upon your own expectations.

## **Building Resilience in Class rooms**

Five Ways to Cultivate Resilience were developed by Marilyn (2015)

### **1. Promote self-reflection through small-group discussions.**

Small-group discussion exercises that emphasis on heroic literary characters are an excellent way, particularly for younger students, to reflect on resilience and the role it plays in life success. After children have read a book or heard a story that features a heroic character, encourage them to reflect by answering questions related to it. Like *Who was the hero in this story? Why? What challenge or dilemma did the hero overcome? What personal strengths did the hero possess? What choices did he or she have to make? How did other people support the hero? What did the hero learn? How do we use the same personal strengths when we overcome obstacles in our own lives? Can you share some examples?*

### **2. Encourage reflection through personal essays.**

Written exercises that focus on sources of personal strength can help middle and high school students learn resilience-building strategies that work best for them. For example, by exploring answers to the following questions, students can become more aware of their strengths and what they look for in supportive relationships with others. *Write about a person who supported you during a particularly stressful or traumatic time. How did they help you overcome this challenge? What did you learn about yourself? Write about a friend that you supported as he or she went through a stressful event. What did you do that most helped your friend? What did you learn about yourself? Write about a time in your life when you had to cope with a difficult situation. What helped and hindered you as you overcame this challenge? What learning did you take away that will help you in the future?*

**3. Help children learn from student failures.**

In her insightful article *Why Parents Need to Let Their Children Fail*, published in *The Atlantic*, middle school teacher Jessica Lahey (2013) discusses how learning from failure is vital to becoming a resilient young person. Teachers can play an important role this by Creating a classroom culture where failure, setbacks, and disappointment are an expected and honored part of learning. Establish and reinforce an atmosphere where students are praised for their hard work, perseverance not just for grades and easy successes. Hold students accountable for producing their own work, efforts from which they feel ownership and internal reward. Educate and assure parents that supporting kids through failure builds resilience, one of the best developmental outcomes that they can give their children.

**4. Bring discussions about human resilience into the classroom.**

Opportunities thrive to connect resilience with personal success, achievement, and positive social change. Expand discussions about political leaders, scientists, literary figures, innovators, and inventors beyond what they accomplished to the personal strengths they possessed and the hardships they endured and overcame to reach their goals. Help students learn to see themselves and their own strengths through these success stories.

**5. Build supportive relationships with students.**

Good student-teacher relationships are those where students feel seen, felt, and understood by teachers. This happens when teachers are in harmony with students, when they notice children's needs for academic and emotional support. These kinds of relationships strengthen resilience. When adults reflect back on teachers who changed their lives, they remember and cherish the teachers who encouraged and supported them through difficult times.

Adopting innovative techniques in classroom like Role Play, Problem Solving, Projects etc can bring in hands own experience for the learner. Direct experiences help in developing qualities in learner which help them to be a better person in terms of success in personal and professional life. This become important as resilience plays a major role in overcoming setbacks and reaches one's goal in life.

**Conclusion**

Living resiliently is more than just "bouncing back." It is about shifting our perceptions, changing our responses, and learning something new. Resilience brings a better chance in attaining one's life goals more effectively. Understanding resilience and the strategies for developing resilience will help a teacher to plan the teaching learning process in accordance with it. The peer group, the families, the schools and the communities have significant roles to play in fostering resilience in an individual. When resilience is fostered one will have a higher achievement through better outlook towards life.

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